Twenty Minutes Late

By

Pansy.

WESLEYAN

Public Day School,

RUSSELL ROAD,

PORT ELIZABETH.

4th Standard Prize,

FOR

Encouragement to Persevere

AWARDED TO

Miss Martha Stuth

December 20 1894

"HOW COULD WE HAVE GOT HERE SO QUICK?" (*p.* 21.)

TWENTY MINUTES LATE.

BY

PANSY

(*Isabella M. Alden*),

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TWENTY MINUTES LATE.

CHAPTER I.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE autumn day was as beautiful as scarlet and crimson and gold maple leaves could make it. The air was a charming crisp. The world looked lovely, and did its best to make Caroline Bryant own it. But that young woman's heart was sore and sad. She tried her best to be cheerful, and succeeded so well that her little sister Daisy confided to the dolls that "Sister Line took disappointments in a lovely way." Caroline did laugh a little when she heard this, but in a somewhat scornful way. It struck her as absurd that anybody should call her trouble disappointment. "Because," she told herself philosophically, "I do not suppose one can properly use that word when there has never been the slightest hope of having one's wish, and I am sure I have never for five seconds believed that I could go away. It was out of the question, of course."

Despite which statement, and following the smile so suddenly that it must almost have startled it, a great

tear plashed down into the dishwater. Say what she might about never having an idea of it, the fact remained that when the letter was written and sealed and dropped into the post-office, which said a very grateful "No" to the invitation, an added lump of pain seemed to rise up in the girl's throat.

The invitation had been from Judge Dunmore himself, heartily seconded by his wife, to spend two beautiful weeks in their city home and attend the Exposition, where so many wonderful things were to be seen that the Judge said it was really quite an education for a young person with wide-open eyes.

The letter had further added that they would be glad to include both Ben and Daisy in the invitation, only they were well aware that the little Daisy would be considered too young to make a visit apart from her mother, and that Ben, the caretaker, would be needed to look after mother and sister; so that Miss Caroline was the only person whom they could in honesty be said to expect.

It would be difficult to describe the state of excitement into which this letter threw Caroline Bryant. She remembered taking a journey with her mother on the cars when she was nine years old—a journey of seven hours' duration—and the marvellous experiences of that day she sometimes went over, even now, for Daisy's benefit. It was her one journey, and she had all an intelligent girl's longing for travel and the experiences to be gained by travel.

The very "toot-toot" of the engine, as it halted for a few seconds at the depôt around the corner, and then hurried on with increased speed, apparently sorry for having lost so much time, made her cheek flush and her heart beat faster. What joy it would have been to

have taken a journey all by herself—quite a long journey too, nearly a hundred miles.

To be sure, a grey-headed lawyer whom Judge Dunmore knew would be on the same car with her, and see that she stopped at the right station. "Just as though she would not know enough for that!" she said to the dishes, with a toss of the head. But then what was the use of talking about that? She couldn't do it. It was quite impossible, of course, to think of going, notwithstanding the fact that Judge Dunmore had enclosed a pass for her over the road. There was something very delightful to her in the thought of travelling on a "pass." "Only people of distinction have them," she said to Daisy, and she could not help laughing over the little girl's question,—

"Then, Line, what right would you have to use one? I mean," she added, when Caroline laughed, "that although you are dear and precious, and are more to us than any one else in the world, of course you are not what they mean by a person of distinction, are you?"

"Not yet," her sister had answered gaily; "but you wait, little Daisy, nobody knows what I may do for the honour of the family some day. The present beauty of it, though, is that Judge Dunmore is a person of distinction, and he has sent a little shadow of it to rest upon me. What a wonderful thing it would be to visit at his house. Oh, Daisy, if I could only go!"

"Of course I cannot think of going," she had said to her mother, with a wild hope in her heart that her mother would say, "Of course you must go, dear; such an opportunity is not to be missed."

But instead the dear mother had smiled upon her wistfully, tenderly, and shaken her head.

"It is not to be thought of, dear. You know how much mother wishes you could have such a chance; but your wardrobe, which is quite respectable for home wear, would not do to visit in a house like Judge Dunmore's. If there were no other reason, that would be sufficient."

"Why, I have my dark blue dress," Caroline said wistfully, "and you said you were going to make that brown skirt over to me, and my grey flannel looks pretty well."

Mrs. Bryant smiled and hid a sigh, and still shook her head. "The grey flannel is too short in both skirt and waist, Line dear," she said, "and has very thin places in it beside. It will do at home for a while, but could not be depended upon for a day away from home; and the brown one will not make over into anything but a second best, nor will it bear much wear; so you see it narrows itself down to a dark blue dress which has already been worn one winter. It seems hard, daughter, but there are worse ills in the world. And there is the school, you remember, to look forward to after New Year. You must feed your heart upon that, and let the Exposition wait another year."

For at last, after two years of waiting, Caroline Bryant was going back to school. She had expected to enter the fall term, but a slight illness of her mother had alarmed them all, and almost made the daughter determine she would never leave her to toil alone, even for school. However, Mrs. Bryant had rallied rapidly, and had at last assured her children that she really felt better than she had for a long time before she was sick; so, though it was too late for the fall term, plans for the one to open the day after New Year went forward joyfully. Life had looked bright to Caroline

until this letter from Judge Dunmore had set her pulses throbbing wildly. Her neighbour and friend, Fanny Kedwin, had not helped her much.

"Such luck!" she said enviously, as they discussed the invitation for the dozenth time. "If I could get invited to a place like that you may believe I would go, if I had to sell my old shoes to get the things I needed."

"I certainly should, too," answered Line, bursting into the first laugh that she had given in several hours at the absurdity of the suggestion. "The only trouble is, that my old shoes wouldn't furnish the money; and yours must look better than they did yesterday, if they would."

Now Fanny Kedwin was the sort of girl who could never endure to be laughed at, though there was the utmost good nature in the laugh. She answered with sharpness,—

"Well, I don't care; my mother says if her girl had such a chance to see the world she would work her fingers to the bone but that she should go. She says she should think you earned enough to have a little pleasure, especially when it is fixed so it will not cost you anything."

Poor Caroline was paying dearly for her laugh; her cheeks glowed and she held her head high, and spoke stiffly.

"I ought to be much obliged to your mother for the interest she takes in me, I think. But I can assure you that the last thing I want is to have my mother 'work her fingers to the bone' to give me a chance to go away from home for a few days. I do not have so hard a time at home as that would suggest; and I may as well tell you in plain words, Fanny Kedwin,

that my mother and I understand each other, and do not need any help from other people."

She was very angry; in fact, had been growing more angry every moment since she commenced her reply.

Fanny Kedwin gazed at her in surprise. Truth to tell, Caroline was not usually so quick to take offence as this, and often bore plain talk with good nature from this girl, not so well brought up as herself. The unusual exhibition seemed to fill her with curiosity instead of anger.

"I declare, I believe it is true," she said, with an air of conviction, and, not waiting for Caroline to decide whether she should lower her dignity to ask what was true, proceeded to explain. "The girls in school said to-day that Ben was a great deal better than he used to be; that he didn't get mad half so quick, and that he was unselfish too. Well, he was always unselfish, but they said he kept getting more so all the time, and that you were getting worse. Lucy Ellis said you were getting to be a regular spitfire; that you as good as told her to mind her own business last night when she asked an innocent question."

Caroline had no reply to make this time. She was already ashamed of her outburst, and that—even if she had not been conscious that, as far as Lucy Ellis was concerned, the verdict was true—would have held her silent.

She remembered the question well; it had been about this same visit.

"Say, Line," Lucy had said, "why do you suppose they invited you? It seems kind of queer, you know, when they haven't any girls of your age to visit with. Don't you suppose maybe they have a lot of company, and want you for a kind of extra help?"

Then had Caroline's face flushed. In a way that would have grieved her mother—and perhaps it was little wonder—she as good as told Lucy it was none of her business why she was invited.

All things considered, the invitation had certainly been productive of a good deal of unhappiness to Caroline. She tried to think about it seriously after Fanny Kedwin went home. Was she growing worse daily, as they said? She knew she was not so good as Ben, never had been; indeed it was not likely she ever would be. Ben was different in every way from most boys. Miss Webster said he was a rare boy; so did Mr. Holden. But she did not want to grow worse every day. Why did that old invitation ever come, when it couldn't do anything for her but make her cross?

Caroline finished the day, as indeed she had begun it, in a burst of tears. It was because of this disappointment of Caroline's that a day of pleasure was planned for Saturday. It is true, it had been talked of for a long time, but Benjamin Bryant had not really roused himself to action until it became certain that his sister was not to go on the journey.

This same Benjamin deserves a few words on his own account. A clear-eyed, pure-hearted, manly-looking boy was Ben, a general favourite at home and on the street. Fanny Kedwin had correctly reported his classmates' idea of his character. Indeed, she might have said much more, for Ben was often the subject of conversation, especially among the younger scholars.

"There is not a selfish hair on his head," was a favourite sentence often heard, as though selfishness had had its favourite seat in the hair.

"Nor a lazy one," some good-natured boy was always sure to add.

"I never saw Ben Bryant's beat for being always at work, and I never saw anything like his luck." This last contribution to his character was offered by Rufus Kedwin, who was always talking about luck. "Why, he earns lots of money. You've seen that little piping machine of his, haven't you, which looks like a doll's plaything, or something of that sort? Well, sir, Ben makes it spin, I tell you! And the money he earns in a month with the thing would scare you. He gets copying to do, you know, and all sorts of jobs. I just wish I had one of those machines, and you'd see me make it go!"

"I thought Ben offered to let you learn on his," said one of the older boys, with a significant smile.

"So he did last winter, but now he is so busy with it there is never time to learn it; and when he isn't using it Line is. She can run it as fast as he can; well, for that matter so can Daisy."

"Did you learn?" asked the older boy. Thus pressed, Rufus answered that he did not; that he didn't see any use in learning a thing which couldn't be used after it was learned. "If I only had a machine," he repeated, "it would be different."

The boys within hearing laughed. They were always amused when Rufus Kedwin came out with "If I only had." It was a term so constantly on his lips. There seemed no end to his wants, nor the wonders he could do if they were once supplied.

"What is the thing, anyhow?" one of the new boys asked, and was informed that it was a writing machine, and could "go like lightning and do beautiful work."

"Ben is one of your goody-goody boys, isn't he?" said this new-comer.

"Depends on what you mean by that," answered Howard Benham. "If that means downright good, without any sham, and every time, why, it describes Ben as well as any boy I know."

"Well, I meant he is one of the religious kind; goes to prayer meeting and Sunday School, and that sort of thing, doesn't he?"

"I believe he does, and he doesn't go bird-nesting on Sunday, nor get a demerit for it on Monday, nor anything of that sort."

The sneering tone in which the new scholar had spoken had been too much for Ben's champion, who could not therefore resist the temptation to turn the laugh upon him, he having recently gone through the experience hinted at.

I am telling you these things in passing, only to show you in what light Ben was regarded by some of his schoolmates. We were going to talk about the day of pleasure. Ben set himself to working it up, but not until he had talked with his mother about the matter.

CHAPTER II.

CLOTHES.

"IS it entirely out of the question for Line to go, mother?"

"Entirely, I should say," Mrs. Bryant answered, with a tone that had more sadness in it than the boy realised. She was a mother who would have so enjoyed giving her children all they desired, if she only could.

"Well, now, I don't see why," began Ben; "there's the fare provided for, and it is just in the time when you are not hurried with work, and long before the next term of school. What is it that is in the way?"

"Clothes, my son."

"Clothes!" repeated Ben, stopping in his work of skilfully laying the fire for morning to give his mother an astonished look. "Why, mother, she wears clothes at home."

"True; but there are clothes and clothes, my dear boy."

"But Line always looks nice. I was looking at her last night at the lecture, and I made up my mind she was the prettiest girl there."

His mother smiled fondly upon him. "I am glad you are pleased with your sister's appearance," she said. "She is a pretty girl, and is always neat. But, my boy, what would be suitable in our quiet home would be entirely out of place at Judge Dunmore's,

and your sister is one to feel such things. If it were your duty to go there with your best jacket a little worn and your trousers a little shorter than you like them and your neckties old fashioned, I should know that you could forget about them all if you made up your mind to do so, and have a pleasant time in spite of them. But Caroline is not like you in this respect. She would be miserable, I fear. She wants so much to go, that she thinks she would not mind these things; but I know her better than that. She has never been away from home, and does not realise the contrast there would be between her and other girls of her age. You need not wish her to go, Ben, under present circumstances, for I know, as well as though I saw her undergoing it, that she would be miserable."

Ben looked disappointed and troubled. "I don't see what she is to do, then," he said; "she will be hindered from many places where she might have opportunities if she is to go on nursing such a spirit."

"That is true, and if she were able to rise above the question of dress so as to be happy in a neat blue print, when the dresses of all about her were silks or cashmeres, I should be glad; but I assure you she could not be happy so placed."

"But, mother, I don't quite understand you; if you don't think it right that Line should put the question of dress so high, why do you encourage her in it? I mean, why don't you advise her to go and see for herself what nice times she could have in print, if that is the name of the stuff which ought not to be worn. What is the matter with it, anyhow?"

"That is a hard question to answer," his mother said, smiling. "Nothing is the matter with it, I suppose, except that it is not worn by people of means.

I do not wonder that you are puzzled," she added, as she watched his disturbed face. "It is a question that has perplexed wiser heads than yours or mine, this one of dress and what to do about it. I was quite enthusiastic over it once, and tried to get up a society among the schoolgirls, get the wealthy ones to join, pledging themselves to wear nothing but print for a term of years, so that the people who were obliged to dress in print would feel comfortable wherever they went."

Ben's face brightened. "I think that was a splendid idea," he said eagerly. "Did you do it—and if you did, why did not it last?"

"It never began," his mother said, laughing; "I had a wise mother at home, who pricked my bubble for me, and showed me that it was not filled with material which would last."

"I don't see why," said Ben, disconcerted.

"Think, my boy; suppose Miss Sutherland and Miss Webster and Mrs. Judge Dunmore, and any other wealthy people whom we know, as well as many whom we do not know, could be induced to take such a pledge, and should appear from this time dressed in print, how long would it be before the price of print, or gingham, for that matter, or any stuff which they would make fashionable in that way, would increase in price, so that the hardest thing we poor people could do would be to buy it?"

"That is true," said Ben, thoughtfully and somewhat sorrowfully, not so much over the dress question as over the thought that there is much to be learned in the world, and he was not making as rapid progress as he could wish.

The truth is, Ben Bryant was doing well, and was

not far behind the boys who had been to school steadily during his year of outside work; but he did not know it. After this he gave up the idea of the visit, and planned for the day of pleasure.

It was to be a nutting expedition away out at the Beekman Grove. It was true there were nuts nearer home, but none so nice; at least that was the opinion of the Kedwins, who were sure that if they could not go to just that spot they did not care to go at all.

"It's too long a walk for Daisy," said Mrs. Bryant; but Daisy was earnest in her protest.

"Why, mother, I am very strong; I could walk six miles, I'm sure."

Rufus explained earnestly that on the return trip they would need only to walk to the station, half a mile from where they went into the woods, and there they could get the express, due at half-past five—just the time they would want to go home. Oh, no, indeed! He and Fanny would not think of going if they must walk both ways.

"But to ride on the cars costs money," Ben said at last, after looking at Line, who did nothing but look at him. Ben thought there were reasons why this remark would sound better coming from her.

"Oh, money!" said Rufus, as loftily as though he were a millionaire; "why, it costs only ten cents apiece. If we can't afford that much for a three-mile ride—almost four miles—we must be hard up."

"I've walked three miles more than once to save ten cents," said Ben, with a cheerful laugh. "On a pleasant day, when you have plenty of time, it is as nice a way of saving money as I know. However, this is an especial occasion," and again he looked at Caroline.

Mrs. Bryant came to the rescue; she was interested

in this holiday. "Yes," she said briskly, "it's a very special occasion; my young people do not often spend money for pleasure. I fully agree with Ben that ten cent pieces are worth saving—in fact, those who do not save them will never, as a rule, have much else to save; but then, sometimes they have to be spent. I vote for this as one of the times. I suppose the nuts are nicer in the Beekman woods than anywhere else; they used to be when I was a girl, and it is too far to walk both ways. I don't know about Daisy, but the others could manage one way nicely, and have a pleasant time doing it, I should say, and I'll put you up a nice lunch."

Ben "knew about Daisy" if his mother did not; he resolved that she should go if he could compass the matter. He came one morning in high glee, and drew a faint squeal from Daisy in his effort to seat her upon his head before he explained, "Daisylinda, I have fixed it. Mr. Brownlow's waggon is going out to his farm on Saturday after a load—going out empty—and I know a little woman who can ride almost to the trees where the nuts grow, sitting upon a beautiful cushion of hay."

"The wood waggon!" echoed Caroline, in a dismayed voice. "Girls of my age do not go out riding on a great clumsy waggon of that kind."

Ben looked at his mother, who smiled, but said not a word.

"I was speaking of a girl of Daisy's age," he said, rather drily; "I didn't speak for a chance to ride for any one but her, though Miss Webster said she should think we would all like to ride in a wood waggon. She said, when she was a girl nothing pleased her more than a ride out to the farm on the hay-rack."

"Oh well," said Caroline, "the hay-rack is a very different thing. I have read stories about girls riding

on loads of hay, but never of climbing into a great lumber waggon, like that on which they carry wood."

"Then I suppose if I ever need to have you take a ride on such an affair I shall have to hire some one to write a story about it first," said Ben again, half in fun and half in vexation. His sister Caroline's lately acquired ideas in regard to being a young lady were somewhat trying and rather puzzling to him.

Saturday came, as bright as an autumn day could be, and just cold enough for enjoyment. The walking party started on ahead. Mrs. Bryant herself tucked Daisy into the great waggon, and gave Jack, the grey-haired driver, a good old man, and a warm friend of Daisy's, many directions touching her comfort. The ride was one long delight to the little girl. She was surprised and half-sorry when they came to a turn in the road and saw the walking party comfortably seated on a rail fence waiting for them.

"How could we have got here so quick?" asked Daisy.

"Quick!" said Jack, shaking his sides with quiet laughter; "why, we've come powerful slow; it's up hill all the way, and the horses worked hard yesterday, and will have a tremendous load to bring back, so I let 'em take it easy; besides, you entertained the old man so well he forgot to drive."

He lifted her out as if she had been a rare bit of china which might get broken if he were not very careful, and drove slowly on, looking back with a half-regretful air at her as he said, "She's one of the Lord's little white lilies, and no mistake." Then, to comfort himself, old Jack fell to singing in a loud, strong voice,—

"The Lord into His garden comes;
The spices yield a rich perfume;
The lilies grow and thrive."

CHAPTER III.

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER.

WHAT a day that was for the woods! what a delicious piney, nutty smell there was to the air! Caroline Bryant stood just at the edge of the wood lot and looked over on the distant hills—on the tall trees in their autumn dress of many colours, up to the blue sky, took long draughts of air into her lungs, and said, "Oh! how beautiful everything is. I wish we could come oftener. I wish mother was here. Let us come next week, Ben, and get mother to come along. How she would like this view of the hills."

But they didn't come "next week." It was a day to remember for many reasons. Long afterwards the sights and sounds and smells belonging to the woods gave to both Caroline and Ben Bryant peculiar sensations.

One episode to remember happened about the middle of the afternoon. The nutting party had worked industriously for several hours, had roved through the woods gathering other treasures than nuts, had found a sunny slope where only trees enough stood to make it pleasant for a camping ground that bright day, and had spread out their dinner of bread-and-butter, cold meat, rice pudding with raisins in it, and a cake which

Fanny Kedwin had assured them was "really pound cake," made by her mother for this occasion.

Never lunch tasted better than did this. When Daisy, rummaging in the basket, brought out a lovely little tart apiece—Mrs. Bryant's surprise for them—their satisfaction reached its climax.

It was after they had all agreed that it would not be possible to take home any more nuts than were gathered, that they resolved on following the merry little brook which gurgled through the edge of the woods, a little farther up the stream, to see if they could find any late berries. They were rewarded, not by berries, but by the growing beauty of the stream and the wood, and mosses and lichens, which were more to both Caroline and Daisy than berries would have been.

Fanny did not share their tastes. She admitted that she saw no beauty in the rough-looking lichen, and said that the moss had ugly grey streaks through it. But the Bryant basket was filled with some that had the most streaks of any, to the exquisite joy of Daisy.

Meantime Rufus found a new enjoyment in sailing small boats made of the largest leaves from the trees, and seeing them rush down the stream, only to make shipwreck on the gnarled trunk of an old tree which lay in the bend of the stream a few rods below.

"Come down here," he called to the girls, "and see my boat. It is nice here ; the brook has grown into a river."

"I can't go down any more hills," said Caroline ; "I believe I am tired," and she threw herself upon the bank.

"I am tired, too," Fanny said, dropping beside her, "and I don't want to see any old boat either. Rufus

is just wild over the water. If it were the ocean there would be some sense in it, but a little brook I am tired of."

"Don't go down there, Daisy!" called out Caroline, as the little girl was taking careful steps down the hill in answer to Rufus's call. She stopped at Caroline's word, but looked wistfully down on the bright stream, that had become "almost a river." She was fond of water. "I would not go, dear; I am too tired to go another step, and it looks there as though the water was deep."

"Nonsense!" said Rufus, who had come half way up the bank to see why his call was not answered, and heard the words. "If you and Fanny are too lazy to come, that is no reason why Daisy should not see the fish; they are darting about there like anything. I have a line and hook in my pocket, and I should not wonder if she could catch one. Let her come, Line; I'll take care of her. Where is Ben?"

"He went to cut some canes for us to walk home with. Do you want very much to go, Daisy? Well, Rufus, you keep watch over her, won't you? She isn't used to water, you know."

"'Course," said Rufus, indifferently, "there is no danger, not the least in the world. She couldn't drown herself if she should try."

"I should not like to have her try," said Caroline, with a shiver; "she would get a wetting at least, and take cold."

Then they went down the hill together. Caroline changed her position to get a view of the little girl established on the bank with a fish-line, standing very still, with a look of intense interest on her face. If she should catch a fish, what an event it would be!

There really seemed to be no danger whatever, as Rufus had said, and Caroline allowed her mind to wander away from her little sister, and only half listened to a long story Fanny was telling, because her thoughts went forward to that city home which she so longed to visit, and for the hundredth time she began to picture to herself the delights that would have been hers if she had gone.

Suddenly a faint little scream made her turn quickly in that direction. Rufus was nowhere to be seen, and the brown head of the little fisher was trying to struggle up from the water. With a few great bounds Caroline Bryant was at the foot of the hill, followed by the frightened Fanny.

"For mercy's sake, what has happened?" she called; then, taking in the situation, she added her cry to the excitement. "Rufus, oh, Rufus! where are you? Daisy is drowning!"

It really seemed as though she were. Rufus had been mistaken when he said she could not drown if she tried; nothing would have been easier for a frightened little girl who could not stand on the slippery stones.

Caroline waited for no Rufus, gave no thought to herself, nor indeed to what was best to be done, but made a spring into the swift-flowing water and grasped for her sister's dress; but the stream was deep at that point and the current swift, and Caroline unused to the water. The utmost she could do was to grasp the branch of a fallen tree which hung low over the brook, and hold to it with one hand, while she held Daisy firmly under the other arm.

As for Fanny Kedwin, her screams did good service. Rufus appeared at last from behind a tree further down the road, but not before Ben Bryant had come with

great bounds, throwing off his jacket as he ran, and by the time Rufus, pale and ashamed, had reached the water's edge, Ben had Daisy in his arms, and was calling out, "Give Line your hand, quick!"

"I don't want his hand," said Caroline, marching proudly out of the stream and up the hill, the water dripping from her clothes.

"Where is Daisy? Give her to me. Oh, Ben! is she hurt?"

"Not a bit," said Ben cheerfully, though his usually ruddy cheeks were pale, and he held his limp little sister in a very close embrace, having already seized his coat and wrapped it around her. "She will be all right as soon as she can have something dry on. How shall we manage it, Line?"

"Give her to me," said Caroline, holding out her arms. "Gather some sticks, and start a fire as soon as you can. I must get her clothes off and dry them. What can I wrap her in while they are drying? If my clothes were not wet!"

"Here," said Rufus, stripping off his jacket in haste, "put this around her, it will help some. Oh, Line! I am so sorry. I didn't think there was the least danger of her tumbling in. I had just gone a little way up the road to hunt a squirrel I saw go by. I can't imagine how it happened."

"The fish-pole slipped into the water," explained the quivering lips of Daisy, "and I tried to get it, and then I slipped."

Caroline's first impulse had been to haughtily refuse the jacket, but a glance at Rufus's troubled face, together with a warning look from Ben, saved her from this bit of rudeness; besides, the jacket was a thick one, and added quite a little to Daisy's comfort.

In a very short space of time a fire was burning brightly, and a fireplace of stones hastily set up, a sheltered spot having been found. Both boys worked with a will.

"What shall we do for a match?" Ben asked, pausing in dismay, just as the fire was ready to be lighted.

"I have one," said Rufus, producing a tin box filled with those useful articles. Ben bent over with a grave face; he was glad to have the match, but the fact that Rufus had them in his pocket made him think of the news he had heard but the day before, that Rufus was learning to smoke.

Work went forward rapidly now. Fanny Kedwin, not to be behind the others in her quick-witted helpfulness, went behind the branches of a gnarled tree and slipped off a bright red flannel petticoat, which she proposed should enwrap the little drowned maiden while her clothes were being dried. This, with the addition of Rufus's jacket, which was not so large nor so wet as Ben's, soon made for her a picturesque costume; her own garments meanwhile were hung upon sticks hastily cut and driven into the ground about the fire.

It was really a pretty sight when all was done, and the spirits of the boys rose rapidly. Even Fanny declared that, since no one was hurt, it was great fun. But Daisy was very quiet. The chill of the water was too recent upon her shrinking flesh, and her terror had been too real, to rally so rapidly. She found opportunity for a word in private with Caroline, who would not allow her out of her sight.

"Line, dear, I want to ask you something. Before you came down to the water I thought nobody saw me,

and I thought I should drown, and I did not want to; I felt afraid."

"Of course you did not want to drown, darling," said Line, giving her some vigorous kisses and hugging her closer. "Line was a naughty sister to let you go down there with that heedless boy. I will never trust you with him again, if he lives to be a hundred."

"Oh, Line! he didn't mean to do any harm. He thought I knew enough to stand still on the bank. But I did not think I would be afraid to drown."

"Don't!" said Caroline, almost sharply, shivering as though a north wind had struck her; "I cannot bear to hear you talk about it. Of course you would be afraid to drown. It's not natural for little girls to feel any other way."

"But little girls die," said Daisy thoughtfully.

"You shall not," declared Caroline, with another embrace that was almost fierce.

Daisy gave over any further attempt to get any knowledge on this subject from Caroline, and decided it was not wise to talk to her about such things.

A little later in the day, when the brisk fire and brisk wind had done their duty with the wet clothes, and Daisy was arrayed in her own garments once more —"They would be as good as new if they had only been ironed," Line told her—Daisy sought a convenient moment to slip her hand into Ben's, and draw him aside to say, "Ben, I want to ask you something, and I don't want the others to hear, because they do not seem to understand. When I was down there in the water, and no one came for just a little minute—it seemed longer than that, you know—I thought you could not hear me, and would never come, and I should drown to death. I was afraid, and did not want to.

Line says of course not; that little girls always feel so. But little girls die. I do not want to be afraid to die. I did not think I would be. Ben, why do you think Jesus let me feel so?"

Ben's nerves were stronger than Caroline's. He controlled the inward shudder, and only pressed the small dear hand closer, as he said, after a thoughtful moment, "Little Daisy, I do not understand those things very well. I have had no chance to study them, and I may teach you wrong; but I will tell you how it seems to me—you did not drown, you know?"

"Oh, no!" said Daisy gratefully, "Line came very quick, and so did you; but I thought I was going to."

"But Jesus knew you were not going to, Daisy, and that is the reason He did not come to whisper to you not to be afraid, that He was going to take you home to Heaven. If the time had come for you to go, I do not think you would have been afraid. Do you understand what I mean?"

A radiant smile broke over the grave little face. "Oh yes, I do," she said eagerly; "you mean, He did not make me want to die because He did not mean to let me die yet, and it was so I would not be disappointed when you brought me back. You know He is very thoughtful of little girls."

"Yes," said Ben, then bent down and kissed the fair face, which was paler than usual this afternoon, and thought how easily she took up his half-expressed notion and made it clear for him; and thought also that "He" was "very good" to the brothers of little girls, for how could they have lived without Daisy?

CHAPTER IV.

"A PRETTY STATE OF THINGS."

BUT berries and squirrels and bright leaves had some way lost their charm for the entire party.

"Let us go away as soon as we can," Rufus said. "I don't believe I ever want to come to these woods again."

"I shouldn't think you would," said Caroline significantly. She could not help this one reference to his unfaithfulness. However, once away from that particular spot, Rufus proved to be not so much in a hurry. He roved off after a squirrel or a bird, or sometimes only a queer-looking flying bug; also he climbed a tree in search of a deserted bird's nest, and dashed into a thicket after a peculiar kind of walking-stick, getting himself entangled in such a way that Ben had to go to his rescue, and it was a work of time to release his jacket without leaving a piece of it on the thorn bush.

"Do come on!" said Caroline, at last losing patience entirely; "we shall be late for the train, and I'm sure I cannot walk home to-night if I never reach there."

"Are you very tired?" Ben asked, looking anxiously at her. The truth was, he was not accustomed to hearing his sister speak in that manner.

"My head aches a little," she said evasively. This

was a mild statement of the truth; as a matter of fact, her head ached so badly it seemed to her she could not get home.

The fright about Daisy, and the anxiety afterward lest the frail little girl should take cold, had reacted upon her in this manner, and as she was unused to headache, it was all the harder to bear.

"This last has been too much for you," said Ben. Then, raising his voice, he spoke with authority. "Come, Rufus, you must not hinder us any longer. If we miss that train I don't know how Line will get home. She certainly cannot walk."

"Miss the train!" said Rufus, in contempt; "more likely we shall have to sit in that old shed at the junction and wait for half an hour. It isn't near train time. Look at the sun. I should think it would be a great deal better to take it slowly, and use up the time on the road." Nevertheless he left off chasing the last squirrel, and walked quietly along toward the junction.

But squirrels and other creatures had taken more time than they had planned. Arrived at the junction, Ben went at once to make inquiries, and returned with a disturbed face. "Here is a pretty state of things," he said; "that train has been gone twenty minutes."

"Gone!" echoed Rufus; "what does that mean? They have changed their time."

"No, they haven't changed their time. We have wasted our time over squirrels and things," said Ben, in a greater state of vexation than he often allowed himself to exhibit.

Caroline, as soon as she heard the news, had dropped in a dismayed heap on the ground, as if to say that to take another step was out of the question.

"What is to be done, I should like to know?" said

Ben. "It will not be possible for these girls to walk home."

"They won't have to walk," answered Rufus, in a vexed tone, "nor we either. There's no need of being so cross about it. All we have to do is to wait half an hour or so for the freight. It takes on an accommodation car here that folks can ride on. There it stands now, and all that we have to do is to sit here and wait till the train comes. Why, we need not do that; we can go right into the car and seat ourselves; it will be a comfortable place to wait in."

"When is the train due?" asked Caroline.

"Oh, about six o'clock or so."

"Oh, dear! mother will be so frightened," murmured Caroline. "Wouldn't it be better to walk?"

"Walk!" echoed Rufus, in disdain; "you just said you couldn't take another step, and I'm sure I'm tired enough to drop. You don't catch me walking home to-night, if I wait till midnight for a train. Six o'clock isn't late, I'm sure."

"You ought not to walk," said Ben anxiously, "but I might, and let mother know what has happened, only of course I should not get there much before the train will."

"Of course you wouldn't," Rufus said promptly; "not as soon as the train, I dare say. How long does it take a steam car to run three miles?"

Just then a horse came dashing down the road, drawing a single carriage, with a lady and gentleman in.

"Whoa!" said Mr. Holden sharply to the horse. "Why, here is a troop of our friends. Have you missed the train? That is bad. What is to be done?"

Ben explained, while the lady called Caroline to her side and heard part of the story.

"We might take Daisy between us," said Mr. Holden, in reply to Ben's anxiety about her. "We have room for a small mouse of that size, have we not, Alice?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" his sister said; she could ride between them as well as not, and they were going directly home now. All their calls were made. "Then Daisy can report for your house, and we will call at Mrs. Kedwin's to let her know that her young people are all right."

So Daisy was cuddled into the carriage, the gay robe tucked carefully about her, Caroline explaining anxiously meanwhile to the lady what a narrow escape the child had had, and how much afraid they were of her taking cold.

"She will be as warm as a kitten behind the stove," said Miss Alice, kissing her charge and snugging her closer. "I shall keep her carefully covered, and we shall be home before it is much colder."

Then they drove away, and Caroline drew a long sigh of relief. "I am so glad that Daisy does not have to wait in the cold till after six o'clock," she said. "Mother will know what to do to keep her from taking cold."

For some reason Rufus did not like to hear any reference to the accident, and he muttered that they ought not to have taken such a little "Mollie Coddle" as that on a day's tramp.

"The tramp was all right," said Ben, "but the wetting was pretty hard on a little girl. We know you meant no harm, Rufus, but the trouble we have had was not Daisy's fault."

When Ben spoke in that tone Rufus always wished he had kept still.

"Oh, well, there was no harm done," he said crossly. "I don't think you need to keep harping on it all the while. Come on, Fanny; let us get into the car."

But just then came a pair of fine horses prancing down the road.

"Hold on!" said Rufus; "let us first see who is in this carriage. What a splendid carriage it is. Only look at those horses; that old nag Mr. Holden drives is only a bundle of bones beside them. That's Mr. Staunton; he's a great railroad man, you know."

As he spoke the carriage drew up in front of the station.

"Briggs," said a gentleman, putting his head out of the carriage and speaking to one of the railroad men in front of the switch, "have you a boy about here that I can get to take a package out to the Brooks Farm?"

"There's not a boy about, sir, to-night, but myself, and I'm on duty."

"That's bad," said the gentleman; "I haven't time to drive there. I'm due at home this moment," and he looked at his watch. Then his eye fell upon Ben and Rufus. "Here are boys," he said; "which of you two wants to earn a dollar? I'll pay that to the one who will carry this small package to the Brooks Farm for me at once."

Ben looked at Rufus, but Rufus shook his head. "I'm not your boy," he said promptly. "The Brooks Farm's as good as two miles from here, and I've tramped all day and am tired; besides, I should miss the train and have to foot it home, three miles more."

"I'll go, sir," said Ben, speaking briskly as soon as he discovered that Rufus did not want the job.

"Why, Ben," said Caroline, in a low voice, "can you?"

"Of course I can. I'd walk more than five miles to-night to earn a dollar. It is a good, cool, moonlight evening, and I'd as lieve take the tramp as not. I'm not so very tired."

"Then you are my man," said Mr. Staunton heartily. "You are the Widow Bryant's boy, are you not? I thought so. I can trust you. The package is rather valuable."

"Now," said Ben, when the carriage rolled away, "I'll leave Line in your care, Rufus; see that you get her home all right, old fellow."

"It's a wonder you will trust me," said Rufus, half sulkily.

If you have heard of the "dog in the manger" you will understand Rufus's state of mind. He did not want to take the trouble to earn the dollar himself, and at the same time he did not want Ben to have it.

"Just his luck," he could not help muttering, as he turned away to pick up the lunch basket. "If there is any money errand he is sure to get it, and if there is a fellow in the world who needs money it is I." He was so used to that kind of muttering that positively his own folly did not occur to him.

Ben laughed good-naturedly. "You can't do anything very dangerous to Line, I guess. You see, I trust her where I won't you or myself either. Now I'm off. You are sure that is the car, are you? Hadn't you better ask before you take seats in it?"

"No, I won't," said Rufus. "Of course it is the car. Didn't I come up in it last week from that same Brooks Farm? And I wish you joy of your journey there; it is the roughest road a fellow ever walked. You'll earn your dollar, I can tell you."

"All right," said Ben; "I want to earn it, of course.

All the same, I call it capital pay for taking a walk on a pleasant evening. I wish you were right side up, Line, and mother knew it; you'd like no better fun than to go with me."

"It would be very nice," said Line, vainly trying to smile, but feeling that her head ached so that it was hard to answer.

"You are used up," said Ben, pausing long enough to give her an anxious look. "I don't believe mother will approve of pleasure excursions when she hears Daisy's story and sees you."

"I shall be all right as soon as I get to bed," said Caroline bravely. "It is only a headache, you know, on account of the fright."

"What a set of grannies!" Rufus said in confidence to his sister. "I don't believe there was the least mite of danger. If Daisy hadn't been a little goose she would have scrambled out of there in no time."

"Oh no, Rufus Kedwin!" said Fanny, "you needn't say that; you know you were scared about her yourself; your face looked white when you saw where she was."

"Pooh!" said Rufus; "you go to making a fuss about nothing, now. I never did see such a set!" And for fully five minutes after they had taken their seats in the car silence reigned.

Caroline at once laid her aching head upon the seat and was glad to be still, and Fanny considered herself ill-treated, and was silent, while Rufus nursed his ill-humour; only, however, until a new thought struck him. "I say, Fanny," he began, forgetting his vexation in the new idea, "this would be a good time to go over to Auntie Brockway's and get some of those apples she promised us."

"We couldn't walk over there," said Fanny doubtfully.

"I should like to know why we couldn't? Don't you go to being a 'Mollie Coddle,'" said this consistent young gentleman, forgetting entirely that he was, a few minutes ago, "too tired to take an extra step." "It is not a bit over a quarter of a mile from the switch. We would just have time to get there and back. It would be ever so much less stupid than staying here doing nothing."

"But we couldn't leave Caroline."

"Well, I should think she could sit still on the seat until we get back, or lie still. Who do you suppose would come in and try to carry her off?"

Fanny looked over at her thoughtfully. "I believe she is asleep," she said. "I thought Line was stronger than that. But, Rufus, Ben put her in our care."

"No, he didn't; he said he would trust her where he wouldn't me. He thinks he knows everything, and she knows the rest. Fanny Kedwin, I'm going after apples; are you coming or not?"

"Maybe we will miss the train," his sister said, still hesitating.

"Maybe the moon is made of green cheese," Rufus said indignantly. "Can you think of anything else to hinder us? Once for all, I say I'm going; you can come or not, just as you please." Saying which, he began to dispose of the few dishes and napkins left in the lunch basket by making a package of them to put in Caroline's seat.

Fanny turned to Line. "Say, Line, we are going to run over to Auntie Brockway's. We'll be back in a few minutes."

Caroline made no reply, and her regular breathing

told plainly that if she heard them at all she wove their words in as part of her dream.

"She's asleep," said Rufus, "and will stay so till we get back. Come on; we won't have more than time to get there and back." He seized the empty basket and started, dumping the bundle he had made at Caroline's side as he passed. Fanny gave a lingering look at the sleeping girl and followed her brother out of the car.

"I hope she won't wake up while we are gone," she said. "She will be scared to find herself alone."

"Not she," said Rufus, taking long strides down the road in the direction of Auntie Brockway's; "she isn't one of the scared kind except where Daisy is concerned. They do make such a little baby of her, it does put me out of all patience; but I'll risk Line waking up before we get back. She looked as though she had started out for an all-night job."

CHAPTER V.

"WHAT COULD HAPPEN?"

AN hour afterwards the shrill whistle of the "freight and accommodation" quickened the footsteps of the two on their return trip. Both were loaded with apples as many as they could carry, and it was not easy to hasten.

"Hurry up," said Rufus, looking back with a frown at Fanny's lingering footsteps; "we shall miss the train the next thing and have to foot it. Don't you hear the whistle?"

"I'm hurrying as fast as I can," said Fanny. "I'm just as tired as I can be. You ought not to have dragged me off, Rufus Kedwin, and you'll find mother will think so too."

The simple truth is, both those young people were not only tired but cross. At the last minute they reached the train and fairly scrambled in, with apples tumbling from them in every direction.

"Stupid!" muttered Rufus, still with a frown, as he saw a large one roll from Fanny's grasp.

"You'd better say that to yourself," retorted Fanny. "I'm sure you dropped two."

With most unamiable speed they made their way along the narrow-aisled, tobacco-stained floor and bumped into a hard seat. It took Fanny a little time to recover from the first feeling of utter weariness

with which she had thrown herself down ; as the car bumped and rattled itself over the road toward home she roused herself and began to look about for Caroline. The result was that Rufus, who had spread himself out in a seat in front of her, his hat drawn over his eyes, and his hands stuffed in his pockets, felt himself not gently nudged, and a shrill voice called into his ear, "Where's Line ?"

"How should I know ?" he said angrily ; "where we left her, I suppose, curled up in a heap. I wish you wouldn't yell into my ear, Fanny Kedwin."

I must do Rufus justice, and tell you that he was not always in such ill-humour as on this particular day. The truth was, certain matters troubled his conscience, and gave an undertone of unhappiness to all his thoughts.

"She isn't either," was Fanny's apparently irrelevant reply to his last remark. "I've looked at every seat in this car."

"That's a likely story !" said Rufus. "There isn't another passenger car on this train."

"I can't help it if there isn't. You can see for yourself that she is not here. Say, Rufus, I'm afraid she woke up and was scared to find herself alone, and got out and walked home, because where would she be ?"

"Pooh !" said Rufus ; nevertheless he roused himself and staggered through the car, which was not an easy thing to do, for the train was running even more irregularly than heavily-laden freight trains usually do.

"She isn't here," he said, when he at last succeeded in getting back to his seat. "I suppose she decided to walk home. She took the bundle I laid in her seat. What a goose ! we will get home long before she can, and it is pretty dark too."

"Oh dear!" said Fanny uneasily, "I'm afraid Ben will blame us, and his mother too."

Fanny Kedwin, you may have observed, paid very little attention to the construction of her sentences; so that she understood what she meant herself, she seemed to consider it of no consequence how puzzling her remarks might be to other people. But Rufus was used to her.

"Let him blame," he said savagely; "I should like to know what we have to do with it? If Line Bryant chooses to walk home she will do it, in spite of anything you or I could do; and as for being scared into it, I tell you she is not one of that sort. What was there to scare anybody, I should like to know? All there was to do was to sit still till the car got ready to start."

"But it's so dark," Fanny murmured, trying to rub a clean place in her window, and flattening her nose against it. "I can't see anything hardly," she said, appealing to Rufus after a minute.

"Don't look out, then," said Rufus crossly; "there's nothing to see by daylight worth looking at," and he curled himself down in his seat and drew his hat once more over his eyes, by no means so composed, inwardly, as he was trying to pretend. That Caroline Bryant had awakened, and, weary of waiting, had started for home on foot, was altogether probable, and was a thing her mother would not like.

"I could not have helped it if I had been here," muttered Rufus. "She would do what she liked in spite of me; but then I suppose I could have tramped along with her, and not have got Mrs. Bryant down on me."

For some reason, he did not clearly comprehend why, Rufus Kedwin always felt that he would rather have almost any other person "down on him" than Mrs. Bryant.

It was quite dark when the train reached the Willow Lane Station, which meant home to Rufus and Fanny, and they made all speed out of the car and down the street toward their mother's house.

"Aren't you going to run over to Mrs. Bryant's?" Fanny asked, as, nearly breathless in trying to keep up with her brother's rapid steps, she finally halted at her own door.

"What for, I should like to know?"

"Why, to see if Line is all right."

"No, I just am not, Miss Kedwin! If you want any more running to-night you may do it yourself; I'm ready to go to bed. Why shouldn't Line be all right? You talk as though she were Daisy, or as though it was a hundred miles from the switch to her house."

It was reassuring to think that Rufus had no fears of anything being wrong. Fanny contented herself with this, and entered the house.

Mrs. Kedwin was busy, as usual. She had just been attending to the supper of the latest comers, and was already planning anxiously what she should have for their breakfast. There was very little time to bestow upon her children.

"How late you are!" she said. "Mr. Holden stopped to tell me how you missed the train. Smart people you are to let the train go off and leave you. Well, you had a splendid time, I suppose, and are as hungry as bears? I thought so. Go to the kitchen and help yourselves; Susan kept something hot for you. I should have been dreadfully worried if it hadn't been for Mr. Holden. It was real thoughtful in him to stop, I think," and then Mrs. Kedwin dismissed them from her mind entirely.

It was perhaps an hour afterwards, just as Rufus

was preparing to jump into bed, that he heard voices in the hall, one of which he thought he recognised, and opened his door to listen. It was certainly Mrs. Bryant's voice. His mother was saying, in answer to some question apparently, "Why, they are in bed, I guess; yes, I'm sure they are. Fanny went through the room while I was giving Susan directions about breakfast, and said she was going right to bed. She was dreadful tired. Oh, yes, they came on the train. Why, didn't Ben and Caroline come with them? You don't say! That's very queer. I'll call them right away," and the stair door opened. "Fanny, Rufus! where are you? Are you both in bed? Rufus, where are Line and Ben Bryant?"

"How should we know?" answered Rufus, getting into some clothes, and appearing presently in the hall.

"Why didn't they come on the train? and why don't you come along and tell all you know about them? Here's their mother most distracted; they have neither of them come home."

With a good deal of cross-questioning Rufus's story was drawn from him. Ben was easily accounted for; there had not been time for him to go to the Brooks Farm and return, and then walk home; but where could Caroline be?

"I supposed, of course, she was home," said Rufus, now frightened out of his ill-humour. "Where else could she be? We left her seated in the car all right, and when we got back she was gone. Fanny and I thought, of course, she had walked home."

Mrs. Bryant clasped her hands in speechless agony. Where could her daughter be? What steps could she take to find out? It seemed to her that she could not wait another minute. She must know at once.

Visions of her cherished darling making her way through the dark alone, followed by roughs, her tired feet stumbling in the track just as the train rushed by; visions of everything that could by any possibility surge through a mother's brain in a moment of time, beset her.

Rufus came slowly down the stairs, his face the image of self-reproachful dismay. But no one stopped to look at his face.

"I might take a lantern and go along the road and look for her, only——" and then he stopped. It would have been awful to add the thought, "only if she is to be found along the track she must be dead, or she could certainly have made her way home." In truth, the situation was perfectly unaccountable to him.

"Some of the men boarders will soon be in," said Mrs. Kedwin; "shall I get them out to hunt for her along the track? She might have fallen, you know, and sprained her ankle or something."

"That's so," said Rufus, brightening; and from that moment he rested his hopes upon a sprained ankle.

"Yes," said Mrs. Bryant eagerly, "or, no; let me think what to do," and she leaned against the door and put both hands to her face to try to steady her heart sufficiently to plan.

Suddenly on the quiet air broke the sound of a cheerful whistle. Rufus sprang forward. "That's Ben's whistle," he said; "he's made good time, anyhow," and he threw open the front door. Mrs. Bryant also recognised the notes, and stepped out upon the piazza. Somehow it did not seem as though anything so terrible could have happened to Caroline, since her brother was whistling. The cheerful music stopped, however, the moment Ben caught sight of his mother's face.

"Mother," he said huskily, "what is the matter? Daisy——" but he was interrupted.

"My son, where is Caroline?"

"Caroline?" he repeated, dazed for a moment. "Isn't she at home?" Then he turned fiercely toward Rufus. "Where is Line?" he asked.

"Oh, Ben, I don't know," said Rufus mournfully, all his petty ill-humour gone under the power of this terrible trouble. "I would give the world if I did. I did not think anything could happen to her, you know," and he told his story eagerly, with a painful sense of the fact that it told nothing at all in regard to the girl's whereabouts.

Ben stood for a moment as one transfixed, yet thinking swiftly all the time. If he had taken time to look at his mother's face just then he might almost have had a thrill of joy over the keen, hopeful gaze she bent upon him. Young as he was, Mrs. Bryant was learning to lean upon her son. Ben would surely do something.

"Mother," he said suddenly, "let us go to Mr. Holden. He will know the quickest and best way of doing everything."

Mrs. Bryant caught at the suggestion. "Yes," she said, "he will know. I wonder I had not thought of him. Go at once, Ben, and have men take lanterns and go down the track."

"Yes," said Ben, "I will go everywhere. She must have tried to walk home, and probably sat down to rest and fell asleep, or fainted. She was very tired, and her head ached. I'll bring you word of her soon, mother. Will you go home?"

"I must," said Mrs. Bryant, clasping her hands with a convulsive effort to control herself, "Daisy is alone;

I came out to get some one to go for the doctor; she is hoarse, and I have left her for a long time."

"I'll go right over there and stay with your mother," said Mrs. Kedwin to Ben. "Don't you worry about her, and Rufus shall run for the doctor this minute."

Which Rufus was glad to do. Not a reproachful word had been spoken to him, but he did not like the look of Ben's eyes when he asked for his sister. He did not want to look at Mrs. Bryant at all. There was a sense in which he was to blame for this state of things.

Mr. Holden was not at his boarding-house, and no one knew where to look for him. A little time was consumed in this way, but not much. Ben almost ran over the gentleman as he was speeding down Main Street.

"Hurrah!" said Mr. Holden cheerily. "Is this an express train running away?" But the next moment he was the alert, sympathising friend.

"We must find a railroad man," he said quickly; "one who knows about trains. She may have taken the wrong one; and your mother is right, we must send a party at once down the track toward the switch. Come with me to the Young Men's Rooms; there are a dozen men still there upon whom I can depend."

Rapid work was done after this, Ben keeping close to Mr. Holden, who, having started an eager and trustworthy company of young men down the track, went himself to the station.

"We will get what information we can here," he said, "then we will take my horse and drive with all speed to the switch; I have sent Billy to harness her."

The station looked deserted. The last night train was in; not another till four o'clock. The ticket office was closed, and the night-watchman knew nothing about trains or roads.

"Nothing to be learned here," said Mr. Holden; "we might go to the station agent. But perhaps the quickest way will be to drive at once to the Junction. The night switchman there will surely know about his own switch."

What a ride it was through the moonlight! Ben had never taken such a ride before in his life. He had often longed to do so; he could not have counted the number of times he had said to Line, "What a thing it would be to be skimming over the road on such a night as this!" Nearly always such thoughts came to him when the moon was at its full. At last he was having the experience, but how far from happy he was! Mr. Holden talked cheerfully, getting up theory after theory, more to comfort Ben than because he really was able to plan a theory to suit himself. But Ben scarcely heard him; he was busy going over and over in his mind the wearying question, "Where can Line be? What could have happened to her?" and then shivering over certain possibilities which would come crowding to the front.

"Here we are," said Mr. Holden at last, sweeping around the curve and halting his horse. Before the faithful fellow had fairly stopped Ben was on the ground and knocking violently at the little cabin or shed which was the night-watchman's stopping place.

Alas for their hopes! he knew almost as little as the switchman in town. No. 25 freight switched there, and No. 24 took on a sort of passenger car. It had done so that day, he supposed; he did not know anything about it, but of course it did. The car was not side-tracked now, so of course it had gone. He was not on duty at that point during the day; the man who was had gone home sick; his place was to be filled by a new hand; he went up on the freight that night;

went to Philadelphia; his folks lived there, some of them. No, he did not know who got on or off the freight; he had not come on duty till eight o'clock, that was after the freight had gone.

"Well," said Mr. Holden, after questioning and cross-questioning the sleepy man until he could think of nothing more to ask, "we must find some one who knows more about trains than this man. Isn't it possible to find a person who might have been here when the six o'clock freight stood here, and who can tell what happened?"

The man was sure he did not know. The division superintendent had been down to the switch that day, and had spent some time looking about and talking to the switchman, but he knew nothing about it himself only what somebody told him; the man might have been there when the side-tracked car was put on; he did not know. "Who is that man, and where is he?" asked Mr. Holden.

"He was a Mr. Stevens, who lived in Lackawanna; but he went into town for the night when he was down that way, and stopped at the Pelton House, the man guessed, but was not sure."

"Then we'll go to the Pelton House," said Mr. Holden; "there must be somebody in the world who knows something."

Of course the switchman who had been aroused had to have explained to him what was the matter, and Ben, who listened, felt the cold chills creep over his body; it seemed so terrible, when put into plain, brief English, that his sister Caroline was missing. "The last that had been seen of her was at six o'clock, when she took a seat in the side-tracked car, and when the car started she was not to be found!"

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW FRIEND.

"THAT'S bad," said the man gravely; "it's a kind of poky place for a young girl. I shouldn't have thought her folks would have let her stay there alone;"—Ben groaned and moved away—"not but what the switchman here is a decent enough fellow," the man added, "and he would have looked after her if he had known she was in trouble; but it kind of looks as if some one must have enticed her off, now don't it? Some one came along with a horse and waggon, maybe, and offered to take her home."

Ben fairly ground his teeth together to keep from screaming over the horrible suggestion. But Mr. Holden, who had thought of that before, only turned his head to see if the poor brother was within hearing; then, slipping something into the switchman's hand in return for his broken nap, went back to his carriage, saying, "We will find the division superintendent, if he is to be found. Keep up courage, Ben, my boy; Caroline is quietly sleeping somewhere, I trust, and God is over all, you know."

Caroline Bryant, having had her nap out, tried to turn over, but could not, and wondered much why the

bed seemed so narrow and hard, and what sort of a storm could be abroad to shake it so; then, after an unusually hard jolt, came to a sitting posture, rubbed her eyes, and tried to take in the situation. Where was she, and what was the matter?

Gradually memory recalled the last she knew about herself. She had gone nutting and had almost drowned Daisy, and had a dreadful headache, and Ben went on an errand, and she went on the cars to be hitched to the six o'clock freight. Where were Rufus and Fanny? She looked about for them; they were nowhere to be seen, but a bundle, looking as though it had been made up from the lunch baskets, lay beside her. She rubbed her eyes again, and tried to straighten her much bent hat, and wondered what made everything look so strange.

"Well," said the conductor, stopping before her seat, "have you had your nap out? I've been waiting for your ticket some time, but you were so sound asleep I hated to wake you."

"Ticket?" repeated Caroline, more dazed than before; "I haven't any ticket. I was to pay on the cars, or Ben was. Oh, I forgot! Ben was to go on an errand, and I haven't any money, but I can get it of Rufus. It is ten cents, isn't it?"

"What is all this about?" asked the conductor, and his voice began to grow stern; he thought this young woman was trying to cheat him out of a fare.

Caroline was growing wider awake, and realised that she must have been talking in a most bewildering manner to a stranger. What did he know about Ben and Rufus?

"I beg your pardon," she said, her face growing red; "I think I was not quite awake. But my brother and

I got on at the switch. I am only going into town. I live there; my brother had the money to pay our fare, but he was sent on an errand at the last moment and forgot to give it to me. I shall have to borrow of a boy who is my friend, if I can find him." She looked anxiously down the car again, murmuring, "Where can Rufus and Fanny be?" The conductor eyed her keenly.

"Do you know what time it is?" he asked at last, and his tone was a little kinder.

"Time?" said Caroline, turning back to him with a startled air; "why, I suppose it is nearly seven o'clock. This train gets into the station at seven."

"You are mixed," said the conductor kindly, sitting down in a vacant seat in front of her; "you have been riding all night. It is just getting morning. Look out of the window, and you will see the red streak which the sun is making before it begins its day's work."

Caroline Bryant could never be paler than she was at that moment. "Morning!" she said, or rather gasped; "then where am I, and what will mother do?"

"'Mother' will have to be told all about it, and she will be all right." This time the conductor's voice was kindness itself. "You took the wrong train, no doubt. I can see how it was. You thought you got into the car that was on the side track, didn't you, and that the night freight was bound to pick you up? Instead of being on that car, you are on one that was side-tracked last night for the east-bound train to take. We don't often do it; but there was some upsetting of regular trains yesterday, and we did it last night, and now you are just getting into Philadelphia."

Poor Caroline's utter dismay held her silent. She struggled with the tears that would keep pushing into

her eyes. She struggled with the lump in her throat, which was threatening to choke her. What should she do? What could she do? A hundred miles from home and mother! Without money, with nothing to eat; her dress soiled and torn, and no baggage but a towel much soiled with tart juice, and two or three little plates which had held the tarts; but more than all, and worse—oh, a great deal worse!—what a night it must have been to mother and Ben and little Daisy! What could they think had become of her? How could mother endure the suspense of having her away and being unable to find out where she was?

"Never you mind," said the conductor cheerily; "you are not in the worst place in the world by a great deal. I live in Philadelphia, and I will see that you are taken care of and started back all right, and will let your mother know as soon as we get in that you are safe and sound. Then, when you get home, think how glad they will all be to see you!"

By this time the lady just in front of them had become interested, and turned to the conductor.

"Mr. Brinker," she said, "what is the matter? Did she take the wrong train?"

"She evidently did, ma'am; took a side-tracked car bound east, instead of west, and lay down and went to sleep, and didn't wake up till morning. I've wondered all night where she was going, and how she came to be travelling alone, and not put under any one's care; but I didn't disturb her."

"Poor thing!" said the lady; "if she has friends they must be half wild about her," and she too began to question Caroline, who was having a terrible battle with her tears and the lump in her throat.

A kind, pleasant-faced woman she was; after a

moment Caroline felt it to be a relief to answer her questions and make plain to her how easy it had been to make the mistake.

"Oh, well," said the lady at last, "don't worry about it. The conductor will telegraph your mother as soon as we get in, and assure her of your safety; then he will send you back on the first train, and you will have had a journey all by yourself and seen the world, and will have a great deal to tell them all."

"But I haven't money to pay for a ticket back," said Caroline timidly; and the conductor, who had been attending to other passengers while the lady talked, but who now returned to Caroline, answered her heartily, "Never mind that; you don't need any ticket; we ran away with you against your wish and intention, and the best we can do is to run back with you. It won't cost you a cent."

"Oh, I thank you very much," said Caroline, more relieved than he could imagine for even supposing that they would trust her for the money until she reached home. Of course she could not help wondering how mother could spare so much from the very small sum in her pocket-book.

The next question was, when could she expect to reach home? It seemed to her that she must fly there at once.

"When can I get there?" she asked, and all the longing of her heart shone in her eyes.

"She can be put on the ten o'clock train, can she not, Mr. Brinker?" asked the lady, for the conductor had turned to answer another passenger, and Caroline was waiting.

"There is no ten o'clock train, Mrs. Smith; she will have to wait till to-morrow morning. Oh, she could

take the midnight train, but I shouldn't advise it; it has a long wait at the Junction, and gets into her place only three hours earlier than the ten o'clock, with a night ride in the bargain."

To-morrow at ten o'clock! If Caroline had been told she must wait until she was twenty, it is doubtful if it could have seemed a longer time to her than that. "Did you say there was no train to-day?" she faltered.

"No real passenger train after the one which will start before we get in; not to-day. You know it is Sunday, and the schedule on this road is not full on Sunday; we don't run trains for passengers."

Sunday! She had not thought of it before. Sunday morning, and she a hundred miles from home! Was anything ever more terrible?

"It's a pity it's Sunday, for your sake," said the conductor; "but you chirk up as well as you can; the time will pass before you know it. It will be Monday morning in a little while, and then for home."

"I'll take her right along home with me, ma'am," he added, addressing the lady. "My wife will make her comfortable, and the children will be company for her."

"That is very kind," the lady said heartily. "I was thinking I would like to have her with me, but our house is still closed, you know, and I shall go to a hotel, as I am here only for Sunday. I expected to get in last night, but our train was delayed at Millville, and I lost my connections.

"You will be nicely taken care of," she added to Caroline, as the conductor went his way. "He is a nice man, and his wife is a good woman, I have heard. They have several nice children, and it will be pleasant for you to go where there are children, will it not? Besides, the conductor will know all about trains;

indeed, I suppose you can go home on his train, and he will take care of you."

Caroline tried to think of some suitable thing to answer to all these kind suggestions, but her heart was still full of dismay over the thought that she was a hundred miles from home, and could not even start back for a whole day; it was hard to think of anything else. She murmured something about people being very kind; and then the train gave that long-drawn-out screech of satisfaction with which it enters a city station, and the few passengers began to gather bundles and wraps together, and prepare to leave the car.

"Mr. Brinker," said the lady, as the conductor hurried toward them, "I will seat her in the waiting-room near the north door."

"Thank you," he said. "By the way, my girl, what is your mother's name?"

"Bryant," said Caroline tremblingly. It seemed so strange to be standing on the platform of a car, telling her mother's name.

"Mrs. Bryant. All right," he said, and was off again There seemed to be a great crowd of people around the depôt, Sunday though it was. There was more noise and pushing and confusion than she had ever seen before.

Mrs. Smith nodded to a coloured man, who touched his hat at sight of her.

"Good-morning, James, I'm here at last; almost came last night. Did Mr. Smith wait up all night for me? I want to go into the station a moment, and then will be ready."

Caroline followed her like one in a dream. The lady seemed not to mind the crowd nor the noise, and to be perfectly at home among the sights and sounds so strange to this new traveller.

Left in a quiet corner of the large room, which looked to her like a world in itself, poor Caroline was distressed to find that she could not keep the tears from gathering in her eyes. Wipe them away as fast as she could, there was still another ready as soon as the last one had been disposed of. She made no noise with her weeping, and would have given almost anything to have been able to keep the tears from appearing, the more especially as she saw she was attracting the attention of two or three loungers, who seemed to have nothing in particular to do except to put their hands into their pockets and stare.

It was all hard to bear. Suppose that busy conductor, who after all was a stranger to her, should forget about her and go home—what in the world should she do then? She did not even remember his name, much less where he lived. She did not know where anybody lived; she was alone in a great city, and it was just getting daylight on Sunday morning; and what, oh! what did her mother think? It seemed to the poor girl that she must fly.

Just then the constantly swinging door opened, and the face of her one acquaintance appeared once more. He looked about with a swift, keen glance. Caroline arose at once. He spied her. "Here we are," he said, striding toward her, "all ready for home and breakfast, and a wink of sleep I shall want. I think you did that up pretty well last night. I wired your mother that you were all right, and had the message repeated to make sure that it was understood, and told them that you would be on hand to-morrow without fail, and sent a special messenger up to your house with it. Before we get home she will be reading all about you."

Caroline was grateful and puzzled. Though familiar

with the word telegraph, she had never heard of anything being "wired." Then, how could a man in Philadelphia direct a special messenger a hundred miles away to carry a message?

"I suppose he 'wired' that too," thought Caroline, wondering if Ben would have understood all about it. But then, Ben had never travelled; she ought certainly by this time to know more than he.

They went out into the whirl of people again; for though it was in reality quiet on Broad Street, to Caroline it seemed as if there were at least a country fair in progress.

The conductor took long steps and dodged around corners and crossed streets in a bewildering way. She had as much as she could do to keep up to him; yet the sights she saw filled her with amazement.

"Do the people in Philadelphia go right on," she said, "without paying any attention to Sunday?"

"Bless you, no; they pay a great deal of attention to Sunday in this city—more than they do in most cities of its size, I guess. Things are very quiet today; but, you see, there are so many people in the world that they make something of a stir in spite of themselves. Some of these people are just getting home from night work in different parts of the city. But then it is very quiet. You just take a look at it tomorrow when we come down for the train, and you'll see a difference." Just then he lifted his hand in a peculiar manner, and a man, who was driving what was to Caroline the strangest-looking waggon she had ever seen, drew up his horses, and the waggon came to a standstill. It had a number of little wheels, smaller than Caroline supposed waggon wheels were ever made.

"We'll get into this car," he said, "and that will

save us a long walk and leave us a long enough one at the other end. I often wish I lived nearer the depôt, but then it wouldn't be so nice for my children as where I am now."

Caroline was busy with one word, "car," but there was no engine, only two horses.

"It must be a street car."

She had heard Miss Webster speak of them, and also Judge Dunmore, and here she was getting into one! Street cars, then, did not stop for Sundays. She almost wished that steam cars did not, just for that once, she told herself pitifully, without having an idea that there were plenty of steam cars which had not a thought of stopping for Sunday. She began to wonder how they managed the street car business so the drivers could go to church.

"Flesh and blood horses are handy things when you can't get iron ones," her friend said, settling his burly form into a seat beside her.

Then Caroline ventured to ask a question; since she was here in a large city and must stay till to-morrow, why not make the best of it and learn all she could?

"Is this what they call a street car, sir?"

"Yes; street cars or horse cars, whichever you want to. Didn't you ever ride in one before? I want to know. It must be kind of nice to have something new happen. I've rattled around in them so long I'd forgotten they were not everywhere."

"Do they run all day Sunday?"

"Oh, bless you, yes, and half the night. Every five minutes in the day they racket by this corner. Down on some of the corners they come oftener."

"Where are all the people going?" asked Caroline, amazed. "Couldn't they stay at home on Sunday?"

"Oh, to different places; some to church, some to Sunday School and those sort of places, and some go a-pleasuring to the woods in nice weather like this, and to the parks to see their friends. Oh, there's places enough. Many go down to the ferry and take a boat ride."

"But how do the men manage to go to church if they are kept so busy all day?"

"What men?" and Mr. Brinker turned his keen, half-amused, wholly interested eyes upon his new acquaintance. "Why, the driver? that man who sits out on the stool and manages the horses? Oh, well, I don't believe he manages that matter at all," and the broad shoulders of the conductor were shaken a little as though he might be laughing inside. "They don't go to church once a year, I suppose."

"But is that right?" asked Caroline, in a tone so grieved that the laugh of her companion died out.

"It doesn't look so, does it?" he said. "It's a dog's life they live, and that's a fact; at it early and late, Sunday and Monday and every day. They don't get half a chance to eat or sleep, let alone going to church. No, I always thought the horse-car men had it harder than the steam-car men on most roads, and that is unnecessary. Ours is hard enough."

"I should think everybody ought to have a chance to go to church," said Caroline gravely.

"Well, I don't know as to that. The half nor the quarter would not go if they had a chance. They aren't of that kind. They'd rather loaf around the saloons than go to any church that was ever heard of, and I suppose they might better be driving horses than doing that. If they were fond of going to church, why, it might be different."

"I don't think that makes any difference," said Caroline, with a grave shake of the head.

"You don't? Why not? You can't oblige them to go to church. It's a free country."

"No, but you can give them a chance, so that, if they don't go, it will be their fault, and not yours."

The conductor gave his companion a thoughtful look. "That's a pretty true notion of yours, I guess," he said, after a moment's silence. "Give them a chance, and if they choose the wrong side of the road when you've made a clear path to the right, why, you wash your hands of it, eh? That's a cute remark for one of your years, who has never been in a city before."

CHAPTER VII.

A SUNDAY IN PHILADELPHIA.

"I DID not think it out myself," said Caroline, with a flush on her cheek; "my brother Ben and I were talking about the boys in the printing office being obliged to do Sunday work, and some of us said the boys wouldn't go to church if they had a chance, so it did not make any difference about their having to work on Sunday, and my brother said we had nothing to do with that part of it; that our business was to give them a chance, and then if they did not go we wouldn't be the ones to blame."

"Just so," said the conductor, with an approving nod, "that brother of yours has a clear head on his shoulders; I wouldn't mind working for him when he gets to be a man. Well, there's lots of car-travelling done on Sundays by them that you wouldn't think would do such things; why, there are two or three ministers who come in on the cars regularly every Sunday to their churches. That's a fact," he added, in response to Caroline's astonished look; "I know them myself, and meet them very often. 'Have you been to church to-day?' one of them said to me not long ago. 'No, sir, I haven't,' I said; 'I have been too busy getting the preachers there and getting them home

again to take time to go myself.' He laughed as though he thought it was a good joke ; then he sobered up, and said he, 'Don't you really get a chance to go at all? That is too bad.'

"'Well,' said I, 'if folks wouldn't travel on Sundays folks wouldn't have to work to travel them.' He laughed again, and said he, 'There's some truth in that; but some people are situated so they have to travel on Sundays. See how it is with me: I live fifteen miles from my church, how could I get to it if it were not for the train?'

"'I suppose you would have to live nearer your church,' said I. He shook his head, and says he, 'I cannot do that very well; I have an invalid daughter, who has to live in the country.'

"I couldn't help asking one question. Said I, 'Doctor, what would you have done if you had lived before railroads were invented?' Well, he laughed again, and that was the end of it.

"I like folks to be honest ; I'd have thought more of that minister if he had said, 'I believe in Sunday cars ; they are convenient and comfortable, and I like to use them.' Here we are," he added, giving a sharp pull to the bell as they were nearing a street crossing. There followed another brisk walk through streets less filled with people, and at last the conductor halted before a neat, quiet-looking house. "This is home," he said cheerily ; "now for some breakfast."

Caroline followed him timidly into a room at the end of the hall, where stood a tall, pale woman, with her hair combed straight back in an unbecoming way ; she had a child in her arms, and two more were clinging to her skirts, one of them crying wearily, as though she were simply crying because she did not know what else

to do. "Well," said the woman, turning as the door opened, "have you got home at last? You are late."

"Yes," said Caroline's friend, "we were pretty late getting in this morning, but we are here now, and glad enough this little woman and I are to be here; hungry as bears we are, too. Halloo, babies! how are you all?" and he patted one on the head, stooped to kiss the other, and held out his hands for the baby. The woman meantime looked her astonishment at Caroline, while she talked to her husband.

"They are all as fretful as they can be," she said, resigning the baby. "I have had a dreadful time getting breakfast; they have all stuck to me like burs, and cried every time I stirred out of their sight. John, who have you here?"

"Sure enough," he said, whirling around, "I didn't introduce you, did I? This is little Miss Bryant; I declare, I don't know what your first name is."—It was given in a very low and somewhat tremulous voice.—"Oh, yes, Caroline Bryant—that is her name, mother, and she has come a journey without intending it; she got started on the wrong train last night, and instead of getting home at seven in the evening, as she had planned, she slept through, and got to this city by daylight; that's the story in a nutshell. I brought her home with me to stay until the ten o'clock train to-morrow morning."

"Mercy!" said the woman, and Caroline could not help wondering just what the exclamation meant. Was her hostess shocked with her appearance, or dismayed because she would have to keep her overnight? The poor girl could not wonder at the dismay when she looked down at herself, and realised that the dress which had gone a-nutting and a-wading in the swift-

running stream was actually the one in which she was making a Sunday morning appearance in Philadelphia. It really seemed due to her that some explanation of her condition be made at once.

"We had been nutting," she said, "my brother and some friends and I; when we reached the station my brother was sent on an errand and the others went to take a walk, and I got into the right train, I thought, and fell asleep, and did not waken until morning. I had had a fright, and tore my dress and got it wet, and my head ached so badly I hardly knew what I did."

"Humph!" said the woman; "you must have made trouble enough at home, if you have a home."

This was almost too much for poor Caroline; she struggled with the lump in her throat, which she supposed she had conquered some time before, but which was there now larger than ever.

"Yes'm," she said faintly, "I have a home and a mother. I don't know what mother will do."

"Mother is all right long ago," the conductor said cheerily, and he cast a reproachful look at his wife. "I wired her as soon as we reached the city; she is planning by this time how to meet you to-morrow. See here, Kit, don't pull papa's hair all out," and he tried to turn the attention on the baby.

The woman, only apparently half satisfied, turned away and began to dish up the breakfast.

It was after Caroline had eaten the little bit which she could coax herself to swallow, and retired to the farther end of the room to look out of the window and wipe the tears away unseen, that she heard the conductor's wife say, "That is rather a queer story, isn't it, which she tells? What became of the rest of her

folks who went nutting? Did they all go to sleep? and if they didn't, why didn't they look after her?"

"I don't know what became of the others, I'm sure," the conductor said, taking large mouthfuls of bread and butter, "but I know this party is all right; she is a very interesting little girl. I had to bring her home—there wasn't anything else to do; she will amuse the children, I guess, and so help you a little."

"Humph!" said his wife.

"Mrs. Prescott Smith was on the train," he said, between the bites of beefsteak, "and took quite a fancy to her; she stayed with her in the station while I went to telegraph."

"Why didn't Mrs. Prescott Smith take her home with her?" his wife asked.

"She would have liked to, only their house is closed; they stay at the hotel over Sunday."

"Well, I suppose there was room in the hotel for another one?"

"I suppose she thought a hotel wasn't a nice place to take a strange little girl to, who wasn't rigged up for travelling; she had been nutting all day, you see."

"I suppose she was very glad not to be bothered with other people's business," said his wife.

"Oh, I don't know about that; Mrs. Smith is a benevolent woman."

"Humph! she is benevolent with other people's things; I never heard that she was with her own particularly. She will send her second girl to help wash the dishes after a sociable; but then the girl has to wash her own dishes all the same, and doesn't get a cent more wages for doing extra work, she told me so. I call that the girl's benevolence, and not Mrs. Smith's."

Her husband laughed. "Oh, well," he said, "she has her weak places, I suppose, but there are worse people in the world than Mrs. Prescott Smith."

"Yes, and better people; some of them would have taken a strange girl home with them, instead of letting a poor man like you bear the burden."

At this point Caroline came forward; her tears were dried, and she felt that she could not endure the sound of another word.

"If you please," she said, speaking rapidly and excitedly, "is there not some place where I can go and stay until to-morrow morning? Somewhere where I will not be in the way? My mother will pay the people for keeping me, I know she will, and I want very much to go."

The conductor gave his wife the most reproachful look she had ever received from him, and hastened to say, "Why, my girl, what do you mean? I tell you you are welcome here—just as welcome as possible; we are glad to have you. See how quiet and good the children have been ever since they have had you to look at. Make yourself easy, and be as happy as you can; the day will pass before you know it. It is passing pretty fast for me, and I am getting no sleep out of it. I have night work to-night too," and he arose, and, whistling softly, left the room.

"You must not mind what you heard me say, child," the woman said, not unkindly; "I speak right out, whatever happens to be in my mind, but I don't mean any harm; you are welcome to be here, I'm sure."

"I'm very sorry to be here, ma'am," said Caroline. "It was very kind in your husband to bring me, but, oh, I would so much rather be at home," and now the tears chased themselves rapidly down her face.

"There, there, don't cry! It is hard on you, that's a fact, when you didn't plan it, or nothing. What became of all the rest of them?"

And then Caroline told, as steadily and as clearly as she could, the whole queer little story, and finished with, "What became of Rufus and Fanny Kedwin I can't think!"

"I can," said Mrs. Brinker sagely; "I begin to understand it. You all got on the wrong train; then they got out for something, and came back and got on the right one at the last minute, maybe, and you stayed on the wrong one and came to Philadelphia. It is too bad! I'm real sorry for you, but you must make the best of it, and think how soon to-morrow morning will be here."

Her voice had grown very kind and comforting, and Caroline dried her eyes and offered to help wash the dishes.

"I can do them alone if you will trust me," she said. "I wash them at home for mother every day."

"You do go about it in a business-like way, that's a fact," said Mrs. Brinker, watching the swift-moving fingers with admiring eyes; "I reckon your mother understands how to work, and has taught you. Well, I don't mind leaving them to you, I'm sure, if you would just as soon; though it is so queer to me to have any help that I hardly know how to act. I often think about the time when my Daisy will begin to help me; but my children so far only know how to hinder, and they are master hands at that."

"Is her name Daisy?" said Caroline, catching her breath, and turning quickly to look at the yellow-haired mouse of a girl, who kept close to her mother, and looked pale and tired. The queer lump which had

been threatening all the morning to choke Caroline now arose in her throat again, and she struggled with the tears which wanted to drop into the dishwater, as she said, with lips which quivered, "That is my little sister's name."

"You don't say so!" said Mrs. Brinker, with instant appreciation and sympathy; "and she is a little pet of yours, I daresay? My, how glad she will be to see you to-morrow!"

It was a masterly sentence, turning the current of Caroline's thoughts from the distressing present to the rose-coloured to-morrow, and making her resolve once more to be womanly, and bear her trouble in silence and helpfulness.

It was a busy morning, which was a great comfort in its way. To have folded her hands and done nothing would have been almost too much for Caroline. Mrs. Brinker availed herself of the opportunity, while her dishes were being washed for her, to wash and dress the baby and cuddle him to sleep. Then she hurried about the little room, making it neat and cheery looking.

"What can I do now?" Caroline asked, as, having carefully washed and rinsed her drying towel and dish cloth, and hung them in the corner where her quick eye saw that they probably belonged, she waited before the lady of the house for her reply.

"I declare for it," said that good woman admiringly, "you are just as neat as wax, and no mistake. It shows what kind of a mother you've got. I wonder if my Daisy will ever show her bringing up as plain as you do? Well, I guess you are tired enough to sit down a spell. Or maybe you would like to take a little walk for me out to the grocery; it is just a few

steps beyond the corner?" Then, catching the dismayed look on Caroline's face, and mistaking its cause, she made haste to say, "Perhaps you would best not; you might make the wrong turn, being unused to the city, and get lost, and that would be just dreadful! I'm sure your mother would never forgive me if I risked it, nor Brinker either, for that matter."

"I am not afraid of getting lost," said Caroline, with a glow on her cheeks, "I can generally find my way; but, ma'am, I thought you had forgotten that it was Sunday."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Brinker, "no, I had not forgotten; you ain't used to seeing stores open on Sunday, I s'pose? They don't keep open here, the best of 'em, and I don't make a practice of buying things on Sunday; but there is a little corner grocery just for the convenience of folks who live away out here, and I sometimes slip in at the back door and get one or two forgotten things. I'm making a soup for our Sunday dinner, and I forgot every breath about a carrot or an onion, and soup isn't worth much without those two things in it, you know. If you will look after the children a little I'll just slip down there and get a couple. I always contrive to have a good dinner on Sunday, if I don't do much the rest of the week. It is the only day he is at home to eat with us. I'll take Bubby along with me, because he's so terrible shy that like enough he would cry and worry you out of your wits; but Daisy will like to get acquainted with you, I guess. Daisy is mother's little woman generally, though she does act uncommon fretty this morning, I'll say that for her."

Caroline said no more; it is true she had been brought up to believe that keeping the Sabbath day

holy was of much more consequence than carrots or onions; but she had also been brought up to understand that she must not interfere with the movements of others whom she had no right to control; so she coaxed the fair-haired Daisy, who looked very unlike her own darling by that name, to a seat on her lap in the great arm-chair in the corner, and began a story to entertain her, while "Bubby" stumped away beside his mother.

"I'll tell you a Sunday School lesson story," she said, "because this is Sunday, you know, and a great many little girls and boys are in Sunday School. Don't you ever go?"

Daisy shook her head. "When I get a big girl I'm going," she explained, "and I'm going to take Bubby and the baby. I can't go now because mother can't leave the baby to take me, and I'm too little to find the way alone, and father has to sleep Sundays."

Poor little mouse! What a revelation of life it was to Caroline. Sunday, the blessed day of the week to them, her mother's day of leisure and privilege; and to this family it meant simply a chance for father to sleep and for the mother to get up an extra dinner. Caroline was not a Christian, and she had not known how precious and important the Sabbath services were to her until this day, when she was shut away from them.

"Well," she said, after a moment's thought, "we will have a little Sunday School all by ourselves; at least, we will have the lesson story. Do you know about Lazarus?"

Daisy nodded excitedly. "Do you mean Tommy Lazarus down by Pike Lane? He is a bad, wicked Jew boy; he frowed stones at Bubby and me one day

when we wasn't doing nothing at all, only just standing and looking at him; and his father whipped him for it, too."

"Oh, no!" said Caroline, much shocked. What would Daisy Byrant have thought of such ignorance as this? "I mean the Lazarus whose story is in the big Bible. He lived in Bethany, and had two sisters, named Mary and Martha. Do you know about him?"

"No," said Daisy; "was he a Jew boy, and did he throw stones? If he did I hate him. And why did his sisters both have two names just the same?"

"Their names were not the same," said puzzled Caroline. "Why do you think they were?"

"'Cause you said so; you said they was both named Mary Martha. I've got a cousin in New York named Mary Martha, but her sister's name is Hannah Jane."

"Oh, no!" said Caroline, laughing for the first time since she had discovered herself to be on the way to Philadelphia, and beginning to understand that she must frame her sentences more carefully, "I did not mean to have you understand it so; I mean that the two sisters were named, one Mary, and the other Martha. Lazarus was their grown-up brother, and he was good, and they loved him. Jesus loved him, too—you know Jesus, don't you?"

Daisy nodded. "He is God, and lives in heaven," she said in a grave tone.

"Yes; but He used to lived on earth. He used to come and see this family in Bethany very often, and He loved them all. One day Lazarus was taken sick; he kept growing worse, until at last his sisters sent for Jesus to come and see him; then they waited and watched, but He did not come, and at last Lazarus died."

"My little brother died," Daisy volunteered at this point, "and they put him in a box and dug a hole in the ground, and put him in. I hated them when they did that."

"Oh, no!" said Caroline, "you must not feel so; it was only his body, you know, that was put in the ground; little brother's soul went to live with Jesus in heaven. The sisters had Lazarus buried in a grave, and they cried and mourned very much because he was gone."

"Why didn't Jesus come when they sent for Him?" demanded the listener.

"They did not know; they could not understand why He should stay away when He loved Lazarus so much; but one day, four days after their brother was put into the grave, they were sitting with some friends, who had come to tell them how sorry they were for them, when some one brought word that Jesus was coming along the road which led into the village."

"Humph!" said this little sceptic; "great good in His coming then! I wouldn't have said a word to Him; I would have been so mad to think He did not come when I wanted Him."

CHAPTER VIII.

NIGHT WORK.

FOR a moment Caroline was silent. She felt greatly shocked over such words as these from almost baby lips. It was so utterly different from her own little Daisy's manner of speech. She rallied, however, remembering how little opportunity this Daisy had to learn, and said earnestly, "That would have been a naughty way to feel; because you told me, remember, that Jesus was God, and of course He knew just when to come, and He always does what is right. Martha went out as quickly as she could to meet Him, and in a few minutes she went back for Mary and told her Jesus wanted to see her. The friends who were calling on her, when they saw Mary hurry away, decided that she had gone to her brother's grave, and they followed to try to comfort her. So pretty soon they all stood by the grave. It was not like the graves in our cemeteries, but was more like a little stone house with a door, and a great stone rolled against it. Jesus told them to take away the stone, and this frightened Martha; she did not want to see her dead brother. She began to explain to Jesus how dreadful it would be, and He told her that her brother should live again. She did not understand what He meant, and the plainer

He spoke to her the more she did not understand, until suddenly He turned to the grave and said, speaking in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And that dead man heard Him, and came out of the grave!"

"Oh, oh!" said Daisy, her eyes large and her voice grave and reproachful, "you didn't ought to tell wicked stories. Dead folks can't hear, and they can't walk, nor move, nor nothing!"

"They can hear one voice," said Caroline earnestly. "When Jesus speaks even dead men hear and obey Him."

Daisy looked grave and sceptical.

"Are you sure it is a true story?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," said Caroline, "it is every word true; it is in the Bible, you know, and God told people what to write in the Bible."

Daisy gave a long sigh, and said sorrowfully,—

"I just wish Jesus had been here when my little brother died. I called him and called him, and he wouldn't answer at all; and mother said he couldn't."

"He will some day," said Caroline confidently; "Jesus will call his body out of the grave, and he will rise up just as Lazarus did."

The conversation was interrupted by the return of Mrs. Brinker from the corner grocery with her carrots and onions. Preparations for the dinner now went on briskly. It was an excellent dinner. Caroline, who had never in her own home seen such bustle of preparation for a Sunday dinner, could not help enjoying it heartily; for by the time it was ready she was very hungry, the little she had eaten at breakfast time having long since been digested.

It was not a very quiet meal. The baby awoke at just the wrong moment, feeling very cross and un-

happy, and "Bubby" clung to his mother's dress, and wanted to be held and petted as much as the baby did; but at last he was persuaded to go to sleep, and the baby too dropped off into another doze, so quiet was restored. Mrs. Brinker chose the opportunity to propose her plan.

"It is dreadful dull for you staying in the house all day; don't you want him to take you for a walk? It will be your only chance to see the city."

Caroline's face flushed, and for a moment she hardly knew what to say, especially as the conductor was looking at her in a very earnest, expectant way.

"Oh, no, I thank you," she stammered; "I would much rather stay here and help you."

But the kind-hearted woman urged her scheme. "I don't need a bit of help," she said; "you helped me so much this morning that I'm not half so tired as usual, and now Bubby and the baby are both asleep. My little one here will help mother. It is a shame for you to come all the way to Philadelphia and not see any of it. Don't you say so, Brinker? Why don't you urge her to go? You can take her as well as not, can't you?"

"I'll take her in a jiffy if she says so," declared Mr. Brinker, "and like nothing better than to see her eyes when I show her the sights, but I don't want to urge her against her will; she has ideas, has this young woman, mother."

Some way this sentence helped Caroline to speak out her real reason for declining the walk.

"If you please, Mrs. Brinker, mother never likes us to take walks on Sunday, so we never go when we are at home."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Brinker, looking astonished, "is

that so? Why, what harm can it do to walk quietly along a street minding your own business? It seems to me a nice, quiet way of spending Sunday—enough sight better than a great many ways I know of—but then, of course, you don't want to do anything that your mother doesn't like, being you are away from her; I know just how you feel. Well, I'll tell you, Brinker might take you to the three o'clock Sunday School; it is but little more than time, and that is not far from here; they sing beautifully. I have promised Daisy and Bubby they shall go as soon as ever baby is old enough to be taken along. You would like that now, wouldn't you?"

Poor Caroline looked down at her torn and soiled dress in dismay. It seemed rude to refuse such well-meant kindness; but how was it possible for a neat girl like her, who never appeared in the streets of her own town in other than a very tasteful dress, to go to Sunday School in a great city in a dress which had been nutting the day before, to say nothing of the many disasters it had met with? As she looked down at herself she decided that it really was not to be thought of.

"Oh, I cannot!" she said desperately. "Look at my dress; it is torn and soiled, and it is not my Sunday dress even at home; it would not be decent to go to Sunday School in such a plight."

"You look enough sight better than plenty who will be there," said Mrs. Brinker significantly. "It is a mission school, you know, and they do not pay much attention to clothes; lots of them don't, but then they are not your sort. Well, I don't see but what you will have to stay in the house all day, then."

"Oh, yes," said Caroline, relieved, "I can as well

as not." Then a bright thought came to her. "Mrs. Brinker, could not you and Mr. Brinker go to Sunday School? I can do the dishes. I will make everything nice, and Daisy and I can take care of the children, I am sure."

Husband and wife exchanged glances, and Mrs. Brinker laughed a sort of shy laugh, her cheeks growing almost as red as Caroline's.

"Brinker and I haven't been to Sunday School for a dozen years at least," she said; "we wouldn't know how to act, would we, John? Not but what I'd like a breath of fresh air well enough, and the queerness of taking a walk with him, and without any children to look after, would be something to remember."

"All right," said Mr. Brinker briskly, "let's go. I don't mind going to Sunday School again. I used to like it right well when I was a youngster. Get on your things, Molly, and let's try it. She will manage the work and the youngsters too, I haven't a doubt. She's a wide-awake, capable young woman; I saw that this morning, as soon as I began to talk with her."

They walked away at last, great satisfaction visible on the conductor's face, and the two who were left in charge began a vigorous attack on the dishes. It was a very easy matter to dispose of those; Caroline was perfectly at home with dishes, and really enjoyed reducing everything to perfect order, giving object lessons to little Daisy at the same time as to the best ways of working. It was another matter when baby awoke, and, despite everything the two could do or say, screamed himself hoarse.

"I never knew him to be so naughty," said Daisy, with a grave face. "It can't be because he is afraid; he isn't half so afraid of folks as Bubby is. What do

you suppose makes his cheeks so red? Is it because he cried so hard?"

"It may be," said Caroline anxiously; "but I'm afraid it is because he has a fever."

"Oh, dear!" said Daisy; "mother is always scared when any of us have a fever, because that is what ailed little brother when he died. Isn't it most time for mother to come?"

"I think so," said Caroline, moving the baby from one shoulder to the other, and trying every device she could think of to quiet him. "Never mind, Daisy," she said, between the screams, trying to smile on the troubled little girl; "babies often have a little fever when they are cutting their teeth, and it doesn't make them sick, only uncomfortable."

Certainly if this baby was uncomfortable he did his best to make them so, and succeeded. By the time Daisy, who, after vainly trying to get his attention, had retired to the window, called out joyfully, "There they come!" Caroline was thoroughly tired and a little alarmed; she had had some experience with sick children, and was afraid this baby was sick.

"Mercy sake!" said Mrs. Brinker, bustling in, "what is the matter with baby? How he does cry, though! Has he been going on like this ever since I've been gone? Dear heart! mother ought to have known better than to leave him, and he getting two great double teeth! Daisy, child, why didn't you try to amuse him?"

"I did," said Daisy, coming forward; "I played 'peek' and 'bow-wow' and everything, and he wouldn't notice at all; and she says she guesses he has a fever."

"What!" said Mrs. Brinker, alarmed in an instant, and almost throwing her bonnet in her haste to get the baby into her arms.

"Poor little fellow!" she said, as the weary child laid his tired head on her shoulder and hushed his cries into low sobs; "he has got a fever, John, as sure as the world. Oh, dear me! I hope he's not going to be sick, and you going out to-night, too."

"Why, a fever is not anything to be scared at when a baby is teething," said the father, and Mrs. Brinker assented to this, but declared that he had not been like himself all day.

"And I don't know what to make of Bubby, either," she said; "he never sleeps all day like this; he's been asleep the biggest part of the day, but then he was wakeful in the night, and I suppose he's making up."

"Oh, yes," said the father; "he's all right, I guess, only tired out."

In this way father and mother tried to reassure each other, and succeeded. As for the baby, he seemed to have found what he wanted. The minute his head touched his mother's shoulder he dozed off to sleep again, merely giving struggling little sobs occasionally as a reminder of the sea of troubles through which he had come.

"Poor little fellow!" said Mrs. Brinker; "I ought not to have left him. I never do; but then I don't get a chance. It was most dreadful nice, and that's a fact. I haven't been out walking with John before in—I don't know when. There are so many to take, for decent people, who don't go pleasuring on Sunday; that is the only day we have, and only a piece of that. He has got to go out to-night at six o'clock. He doesn't generally have to go Sunday nights, but this is extra work because some of the men are sick. I wish he didn't have to go to-night. I declare, it is going on to five now, isn't it? How fast this afternoon has gone!

Well, we had a lovely time. We went to the Sunday School, and the singing was just heavenly. They gave us a book, and John sang with the best of them ; he's a fine singer, my husband is."

"Sho!" said the husband, from a distant corner, where he was struggling with a pair of boots which were rather small ; "that will do for you to say."

"It's true, for all that," said the woman, in an admiring tone, "if I do say it that shouldn't. I'm glad I had a chance to hear your voice once more ; if I don't go again till baby is old enough to walk there between us, I'll remember this day. John, as soon as ever I can get this baby sound enough to put down I'll make you a cup of tea to hearten you up for to-night."

On hearing this Caroline was on the alert. Mr. Brinker protested that he did not think it was necessary ; that he had eaten a good dinner, and plenty of it. Nevertheless he did justice to the supper which was presently ready for him, and went away at last in haste, declaring that no day was ever so short before.

"I'll be home in time for the ten o'clock run, little woman," he said to Caroline, "never you fear. I get in at daylight, and have three good hours before my train goes out. Good-bye, all of you ; sleep hearty, and dream of to-morrow. I won't run the risk of waking Bubby by kissing him, for fear you'll have him on your hands before you're ready for him."

Caroline was once more washing the dishes, and Mrs. Brinker was trying to hush the baby, who showed a constant tendency to moan and cry, when Bubby awoke, coughing and crying, arousing the baby to screams again, and for the next hour there were trying times.

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Brinker, as she turned from the baby, who had at last allowed her to lay him down, to feel of Bubby's flushed cheeks, for he too had at last been quieted, "I don't know what is the matter, I'm sure. Bubby is in quite a fever too, and he never goes on like this. He must be sick. He hasn't any teeth coming to lay it to, and he doesn't up and have a fever over the least little thing as some children do. I'm just afraid he is real sick, and the baby too; I never did see them both cut up like this unless something was the matter. I wish I hadn't let Brinker go! But there, I couldn't have helped myself if I had wanted to. That is the trouble with railroad men; they've got to go just at the minute, no matter what is happening at home; but I would give a dollar if he was here now."

"What would he do?" asked Caroline gravely, for she too felt a heavy responsibility resting upon her. The more she looked at baby in his heavy sleep, and saw his fever-flushed face and remembered his heavy eyes, the more sure she felt that the mother was right, and the child was going to be sick.

"Why, I'd advise with him about sending for the doctor," said the mother anxiously. "We don't send for him every other hitch, as some do, it counts up so, and I'm not a nervous woman, and know how to take care of children, but ever since our little boy died I've been anxious over a fever; he died with fever, you see, and some way I seem to feel that if Brinker were here now he would advise that we have the doctor look in and see if there was anything to worry about."

"Where does the doctor live, Mrs. Brinker?"

"Why, quite a piece from here, and I don't know how I'd get him, I'm sure, if I made up my mind; for

my neighbour, who does errands for me sometimes, is gone away down town to a meeting to-night; the whole of them went and locked up their house. They told me they were going when I came home, and they were to take the half-past six car, so they are gone, and there isn't anybody else."

"Couldn't I go?"

"Why, you do not know the way, though to be sure it is just a straight road, with only one turn; but then folks take the wrong turn in a strange place sometimes in broad daylight, and if anything should happen to you I'd never forgive myself, let alone being forgiven by your mother."

"There won't anything happen to me," said Caroline, rising to the occasion; "it is too early in the evening to be afraid, and my mother always told me to do what looked as though it ought to be done, if I could. I can keep a straight road and make one turn, I should hope. Please tell me just how to go, Mrs. Brinker, and I will try it."

"I don't like to have you," said Mrs. Brinker, going to the window and looking out; "it isn't dark, to be sure," she said, "with the street lamps all lighted, and there are policemen pretty thick up this way; but then, to be out in a big city at seven o'clock and after, for a little strange girl from the country, is almost too much. I might send Daisy with you, only she has a cold and is hoarse; she knows exactly where the doctor lives, but she gets cold awful easy."

"It would not do for her to go," said Caroline. "I know I can find my way, Mrs. Brinker, and I know mother would want me to try when there was such an errand as this to be done."

"Well," said Mrs. Brinker, coming back from another

look at baby's face, and an attempt to feel the bounding pulse at his wrist which did not serve to comfort her, "I don't know what to make of baby's having such a fever, and that's a fact. And I'd like dreadful well to have the doctor step in, because when little Rubie was sick he said, 'Mrs. Brinker, you lost twenty-four valuable hours before you sent for me.' Those were the very words he said, and I never forgot them. For nights after Rubie died I'd lie awake, and all I could seem to think or try to say were those words, 'You have lost twenty-four valuable hours.' But maybe we had better wait a little and see how things look, and if baby isn't better after awhile, why, then, if you are a mind to try it, I'll tell you exactly where Dr. Forsythe lives."

"That would only be losing some more time," said Caroline; "besides, it will be getting later all the while. I think, Mrs. Brinker, I had better go right away; the baby looks to me as though he needed some medicine."

While she spoke she fastened her hat, and took her sacque down from its hook behind the door. Mrs. Brinker drew a long sigh, partly of anxiety and partly of relief, as she said,—

"Well, if you will do it I suppose it cannot be helped, though I don't know what Brinker will say to my allowing it; but for the matter of that, I don't know what he would say to the baby being sick and me not having a doctor. I'll tell you just exactly where he lives, and you cannot miss it if you try."

A few minutes more and Caroline, her heart beating hard and fast, was alone on the streets of the great city. What would Ben think of that? And oh! above all, what would her mother say if she knew it?

CHAPTER IX.

WAITING.

DO you remember where we left Ben Bryant and Mr. Holden? Actually that long, long night wore away, and the grey dawn of the early Sabbath morning stole over the world without their having been able to find the right person to give them a clue to the possible whereabouts of the one they sought. The nearest approach to it had been the confident statement of one of the train switchmen, "Depend upon it, she got on to the wrong train somehow. I dunno how they do it, but they do such things sometimes, and you can't make head nor tail to it—how they could have done it, nor what they did, anyhow—but it all comes out right in the end."

It was this faint hope which brought both Ben and the minister to the station again just as the morning was breaking, with a faint idea of telegraphing somewhere to learn about possible mistakes in trains. Ben had been home to see how Daisy was doing, and had said everything comforting he could to his mother, taking pains to explain to her how many people had said that of course Line was safe somewhere, because it simply was not possible that anything very terrible could have happened to her in so short a time. And his mother, white to her very lips, had yet smiled on

him and told him he was a brave, faithful boy, and her comfort; then had said earnestly,—

"We must pray, Ben—pray as we never have before; it is our only refuge."

Then Ben, almost choking to keep back his tears, had rushed out again into the night; but before joining Mr. Holden he had gone around to the little shed where they kept wood and coal, and bowing there in the darkness, had prayed as he felt sure he never prayed before. A little later he stood beside Mr. Holden, listening while that gentleman asked questions of the telegraph operator.

"Your best plan will be to wait till the morning express comes in from Elizabethtown," explained that official. "The men who come in then are regular railroad hands, and know all that goes on; if there was any mixing up of trains last night they can tell you all about them, and they will know the conductors of the different trains and where to reach them; it will be along in thirty minutes. I don't see anything for you but to wait until then."

"Waiting is the hardest part of what we have had to do all night, isn't it, Ben, my boy?" said Mr. Holden, turning with a sympathising smile, and resting his hand on the boy's shoulder. Some way the kindly act and word seemed to take away every vestige of Ben's self-control; he had never fainted in his life, but the room began to swim about in a strange fashion, and if he had not clutched one of the pillars which supported the building he would have fallen to the floor; as it was, he struggled and swallowed, and told himself that he would not fall, and he would get over this dizziness without letting anybody know about it; that he was a miserable baby, not fit to be trusted to take

care of his mother. And the thought of his mother brought back the blood to its place and its duty. In a minute or two more he was able to turn and ask, almost in a natural tone of voice,—

"What time is it now, Mr. Holden?" And Mr. Holden drew his watch and carefully noted the time, as though Ben had a chronometer which needed regulating at that moment. It was just at that moment that the telegraph operator said, "Mr. Holden, this way, if you please." Mr. Holden and Ben started as though it had been one pair of feet that bore them both.

"What is it?" said Mr. Holden.

"Nothing, sir," said the operator, eyeing Ben anxiously, "only there is a dispatch coming for Mrs. Bryant." This in a lower tone, intended only for the minister's ears.

"Give it to me at once," said Ben, in a voice that he did not recognise as his own. And Mr. Holden said quietly, "We keep nothing from Ben, Mr. West; he is his mother's dependence." And then Ben knew he must bear whatever was coming, for his mother's sake.

"Hurrah!" said the operator, with sudden change of voice; "listen to this: 'Little girl safe—took wrong train—will be in on the ten o'clock run from this city.'"

"What city?" asked Mr. Holden, as Ben leaned against the pillar again for support.

"The dispatch is dated at Philadelphia, and sent by the conductor of No. 11. Caroline must have made connection with his train somehow. I don't understand it, but when the morning express gets in the conductor can tell you how it was."

It was a strange Sunday; for the first time in their

remembrance none of the Bryant family went to church. Daisy was still hoarse, and Mrs. Bryant was too anxious to leave her, as well as too weary from her night's vigil to attend. As for Ben, he felt sure he could not sit still and at the same time keep awake.

"You ought not to try to keep awake," the mother said compassionately, as she looked at his haggard face. "Poor boy! a night's watch and anxiety have told upon you."

"Never mind," said Ben, "everything is all right; Line will be home to-morrow. Just to think of her being in Philadelphia, mother! Do you suppose she will go to church?"

Mrs. Bryant shook her head. "You forget what dress and hat she has, my son."

"Sure enough; and her dress was torn and soiled; but then, I believe if I were there in this jacket and trousers I should go."

"Caroline will not," said her mother positively, "and I cannot blame her. She has at least been able always to be neat in her dress."

Ben, at his mother's suggestion, took a long nap, then took his turn in caring for and interesting Daisy; and they all occupied themselves more or less with questions such as these, "I wonder what Line is doing now?" "Where do you think she can be staying all day?" "Do you suppose she is very lonesome?"

On the whole, they were all glad when the day was done, and they could retire to rest, saying to themselves as they closed their eyes, "Caroline will be here to-morrow."

"It isn't as though I had sent her away on a visit, with everything about her in order and comfortable," Mrs. Bryant told herself, as she rested her weary head

on her pillow; "it is the unnaturalness of the whole thing, and the terrible suspense connected with it. What a night it was!" and she shuddered over the mere thought of it, and felt as though when once her mother arms were closed about her darling, she could never let her go away from them again.

Monday was easier. The necessity for working all day which was upon them made the time pass more rapidly. By five o'clock in the afternoon Mrs. Bryant and Daisy were dressed for the station, and waiting for Ben.

"I am so glad I am well enough to go," Daisy said gleefully. "Mother, it is real good that I didn't get very sick, isn't it? It would have been so hard for Line not to see me as soon as she got off the train."

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Bryant, stooping to kiss her fair little daughter; "we have a great deal to be thankful for. If Line had found you coughing and feverish it would have been very hard for her. I am afraid she has worried a great deal about you. You are so liable to take a severe cold when you get your feet wet, that it seems like a special Providence that you escaped."

Then came Ben, in hot haste. "Hurry up, mother, please," he said breathlessly; "we shall have to walk briskly to be in time for the train. It seemed as though I was never going to get away. Everybody wanted something extra."

However, they arrived at the station ten minutes before the train was due, and learned that it was fifteen minutes late.

"Never mind," said Ben, to Daisy's disappointed look; "twenty-five minutes isn't long to wait. Think of hours and hours! That is where I stood when the man was telling Mr. Holden all about—he didn't know

what might have happened; some of the things seemed hard. I had to lean against the pillars to keep me from tumbling over. I was so scared at my own thoughts. Then I went and stood outside in the cold and leaned against the door; some of the time I couldn't breathe inside. Oh, it was a night to remember for a good while!"

"Poor Ben!" said Daisy pityingly. "Mother and I had a hard time too. I felt so sorry for mother, you can't think! Some of the time I couldn't decide whether it would be better to be hoarse and cough, and so give her something real hard to think about, and keep her from wondering about Line, or whether it would be better to be real well, and not give her an anxious hour."

Ben broke into a merry laugh.

"Could you arrange to do whichever you decided would be the best for mother?" he asked.

"Why, no," said Daisy slowly, "of course not; only I could keep back the cough a little, you know, and not talk, to show I was hoarse, or I could cough and let her think about that for a while, and I didn't know which was best."

"And which did you do, Daisy? It was as perplexing a situation as I ever heard of."

"Why, at last I decided to be just myself, and not try to make believe anything, and ask God to help her bear it all."

"That was a wise little woman," said Ben, unable to resist kissing the somewhat pale cheek of his darling, even though they were in the station and several people were looking at them.

"There comes Mr. Holden," said Daisy, as the door opened for the twentieth time since they stood there.

"I wonder if he has come to meet Line?" It appeared that he had. He came over to them and shook hands all around, and asked particularly after Daisy, telling her she was the most sensible little woman he knew to decide to get well, and be on hand to welcome her sister home. Several other people came over and shook hands with Mrs. Bryant. Some whom she did not suppose knew who she was inquired kindly after Caroline, and told her they had sympathised with her in her anxiety, and were so glad to hear that Caroline was well. Among others came the Kedwins, Rufus and Fanny, and, to Mrs. Bryant's surprise, Mrs. Kedwin herself.

"I could hardly get away," she said, shaking hands with Mrs. Bryant, "just near to supper time, you know; but I had to come down to the market, and says I to myself, 'I'll just run over and see with my own eyes that Line is all right, and give her a shaking, maybe, for scaring us all out of our senses.' Land alive! what a night it was, wasn't it? I didn't sleep two hours myself; I kept thinking what if it was my Fanny! And to think it should be one of your children, when you are always so careful of them, and mine have to knock around almost any way. I ought not to be surprised most any day if they do not come home, but I should be. Well, it isn't as if she had done anything wrong; it wasn't even her fault, to begin with; Rufus ought to have taken more care to see she was on the right train; he often goes out to the Junction on that train, and he ought to have known all about it and kept watch. I told him so when I found out, by questioning him, how it all was. I gave him a good lecture after I found that Line was safe. I hadn't the heart to do it before, for the poor fellow was so

miserable I didn't know but it would make him sick; he took it to heart worse than Fanny, I believe, but I tell him that was because he was to blame."

And then the train whistled, and all the people started up and tried to get out of the door at once, and the train came thundering into the station with a final shriek, which Ben could not help thinking sounded like a cry of desperation instead of triumph, and they looked up and down, and right and left for Caroline; but no Caroline appeared.

"She is in the conductor's care, remember," said Mr. Holden's reassuring voice. "Ben, if I were you I wouldn't go on the cars; you do not know which one she is in; the wisest way is just to stand here, with eyes wide open, and watch for the conductor."

He came presently, but no Caroline was with him. The group pressed toward him. "Where is Caroline?" asked Ben, touching his arm.

The conductor turned and looked at him with a bewildered air and a slight frown. And Mr. Holden asked, "Are you Conductor Brinker?"

The man shook his head.

"Brinker only comes to the Junction," he said; "I conduct the train from there." Ben turned in despair.

"Then where can Line be?" he said. But at that moment another blue-coated man came hurriedly toward them, and the conductor said,—

"There's Brinker now; he came on, it seems. Halloo, Brinker! come this way; here is a party asking for you."

"The Bryant family?" the man asked, turning hurriedly at the sound of his name, and pushing his way through the crowd to reach them.

"Yes," said Ben, "we are here. Where is Line?"

CHAPTER X.

A TRYING POSITION.

"WHY, you see," said the man—"which is her, mother?" He broke off to ask this question and Ben in reply silently laid his hand on his mother's arm; then the conductor addressed himself to her, beginning again. "Why, you see, ma'am, it's this way. Nothing has happened to her, but I left her in Philadelphia."

"In Philadelphia!" said Mrs. Bryant and Ben in the same breath, and Daisy said, "Oh, dear!"

In order to understand why Caroline Bryant was in Philadelphia when she was expected at home, we will be obliged to go back to that Sunday evening when she took her first walk alone in the great city. She had gone out with her eyes wide open and her wits on the alert, and made the one turn without mistake, and presently rang the bell at the house bearing the name which had been given her. The walk had not been taken without strong beatings of heart, and without one or two frights. For instance, there was a man on the opposite side of the street who reeled from side to side in such a manner that she could not but think how impossible it would have been for her to have kept out

of his way had she been across the road; he was evidently intoxicated, and Caroline Bryant felt more afraid of a drunken man than she thought she would be of a wild animal. She quickened her steps when she saw the staggerer, and broke into almost a run at last, with her head behind her, watching, until she ran plump into the arms of a burly, middle-aged man.

"Halloo, little girl!" he said in a gruff, but not an unkind voice, "don't carry so much steam on the public street; give a fellow half a chance. It wouldn't be a bad idea to keep your eyes before you instead of behind."

"I beg your pardon," said Caroline, so mortified that she forgot to be frightened, and remembering even then how ashamed Ben would be of her. "I was keeping watch of that drunken man for fear he would cross the street."

"No danger of him, he is much too drunk to think of such a thing; he will keep right on until he runs against a policeman, and finds himself in the lock-up. You will be likely to meet more of them if you are going far on this road; I'll turn and go with you a piece if you are afraid."

"Oh, no, sir, thank you!" said Caroline hastily, beginning to be afraid of him. "I am just at the door where I am going," and she recognised the name on the door with a thrill of delight, and ran breathlessly up the white steps.

She was admitted at once. A young man motioned her to take a seat, and in answer to her eager question, said the doctor would be at liberty in a few minutes, and she could see him. Others sat about the room, evidently waiting, like herself. "Somebody is sick at their house, too," thought Caroline, with a sigh. "How

much trouble there is in the world." Then she thought, for the hundredth time that day, of her own little Daisy, and wondered if the waiting and the fright and the fatigue had all been too much for her. Perhaps she was very sick, and mother was watching alone while Ben went for the doctor. But at this point Line resolutely told herself to hush, that it was foolish and wicked to make herself miserable over such thoughts, borrowing trouble when there was so much real trouble in the world all about her. What if that drunken man were her very own brother! That would be trouble indeed.

A door clanged in the distance, and a firm step sounded in the hall. Several of the waiting people arose; so did Caroline, and a tall, keen-eyed man looked in at the door. Whether Caroline's face wore the most anxious look, or whether it was because she was a little girl, instead of asking who had been waiting the longest, as he was in the habit of doing, the doctor turned to her.

"Well, my little friend," he said, in a quick voice, "what do you want?"

Caroline had carefully formulated her message, and planned how to make it as brief and clear as possible, so it took her but a moment to say, "Will you come to No. 1747 just as quick as you can? Mr. Brinker's children are both sick; we are afraid they are going to be very sick."

"Is that Conductor Brinker's? Children sick, eh? I will go as soon as I can," and he turned to the next waiting one.

Caroline had evidently been dismissed, but she lingered while the doctor spoke a few words rapidly with one and another. Turning from one he glanced

in her direction, and seemed surprised to see her still there.

"You need not wait," he said kindly; "I will be there in a very short time."

"If you please," said Caroline timidly, "could I walk there with you? I was never on the street alone in the evening before, and I am afraid."

"Oh, all right; I will be ready in a very few minutes. So you are afraid to be on the streets alone after dark," he said, as the door closed after them a few minutes later. "It isn't a bad thing for a girl like you to be afraid; I wish more of our young people felt it. I meet hundreds of them, it seems to me, who ought to be at home and in bed, instead of rushing up and down the streets. Do you live at Mr. Brinker's?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Caroline, with a quiver in her voice, and before she realised it, she found herself telling her pitiful little story to this strange doctor.

"I want to know! So you took a journey in spite of yourself?" he said. "Well, well, that was harder for mother than it was for you, I'll be bound. I'm sorry for her; however, you will make it all right to-morrow. There are harder things than that for mothers to bear. See to it that you never do anything of your own accord to give her trouble, and you will be all right. Well, what have we here?" he said, as Caroline ushered him into Mrs. Brinker's sitting-room.

Caroline watched him earnestly as he questioned and cross-questioned Mrs. Brinker, all the while keeping his keen eyes on his two little patients. She could not help thinking, "Suppose she had something to conceal, and this doctor were set to find it out, what would have become of her?"

His rapid questioning was soon over, and he seemed

to be satisfied with the result; but not a word of information did he give the anxious mother. He called for glasses and water, gave very careful directions about the medicine and general care, and, in so short a time after his coming that his visit seemed almost like a dream, was gone, leaving only the comfort which could be found in his last words, "I'll look in early in the morning."

"Well," said Mrs. Brinker, as the door closed after him, "I suppose he knows a great deal more than he did when he came, but he took care that we shouldn't! I do say for it, that man scares me so that I never know whether I am standing on my head or my feet. I wanted awfully to ask him what was the matter, and I didn't dare to, and that's the truth. Do you suppose he thinks it is anything much?"

"I am sure I don't know," said Caroline, with a sinking heart. Something in the doctor's manner had made her feel that a good deal was the matter, but she did not like to say so to the worried mother. And indeed there was very little opportunity for talk; the two babies awakened again from their brief rest, one moaning as if in pain, the other screaming as though he felt himself ill-treated, and demanded relief. Caroline made herself very busy, and so useful that more than once during that long, anxious night Mrs. Brinker murmured, "Whatever I should do without you I don't know!" And indeed Caroline could have echoed the remark; she did not see how one pair of hands could have accomplished all that was necessary to be done. There was little chance for sleeping, and in the lulls when she might have rested the young girl was wide awake and troubled; she had spent so many anxious hours over Daisy, that a time of sickness was a sort

of education to her. She remembered once, when Daisy had been ill, the doctor's questions had been almost word for word like what this one had asked, and his information as meagre. From time to time Mrs. Brinker made a remark which showed that her thoughts were going over the same ground as Caroline's.

"He asked me how long the baby had been ailing," she said once, "and I was that scared over his manner, and flurried and everything, that I did not tell him right; he's been fretty like for a week or more, but he's teething, you know, and I didn't think much of that; he's had a little fever a good deal of the time, but they are likely to have with double teeth. You don't suppose my not telling him the exact time could make any difference with the medicine, do you?"

"Oh, no," said Caroline soothingly, "I don't think that could make a bit of difference."

Before seven o'clock the next morning both Mrs. Brinker and Caroline had ceased to talk; they did what they could, and watched for the doctor. When at last he came it did not need his grave face to tell even Caroline that there was serious trouble.

"I suppose you know what is the matter here?" he said to Mrs. Brinker, low-voiced and sympathetic.

"No," said the poor mother, "I don't, no more than a child; I never saw either of them so sick, and it has come on me all of a sudden, and isn't a bit like their little sick spells, and I don't know what to think."

"It is scarlet fever," he said briefly; "and it would be simply cruelty to hide from you the fact that the disease has assumed a serious form, and there is danger."

What the mother could have felt, Caroline wondered afterward. Of course her anxiety must have been the greater; yet the girl went on the swift wings of thought

back to her home, and Daisy, their darling, so frail that she had been shielded as a flower from every breath of rude wind. How carefully they had guarded her from exposure to this dread disease! Caroline remembered only too well the sacrifice her mother had made to take her, but a year or two before, from a place of possible danger; and here was she in the very jaws of the enemy, which had come in so serious a form that even the doctor owned it, and planning to go to her darling that very day. Might it not be possible that if she got away from the house now, in a very few minutes, it would have been too soon for her to carry danger to Daisy? Hark! what was that the doctor was saying in reply to some trembling words of the distressed mother?

"You see, madam, the cases are more serious because the children have evidently been suffering from the disease for some time. It probably attacked them at first in a mild form, and was mistaken for an ordinary cold, or for teething troubles. Did you not tell me last night of a slight irritation of the skin which you had noticed?"

"Oh, yes!" said the poor mother; "but I'm sure it was just a breaking out from those warm days we had last week. Don't you remember, doctor, it was quite hot in the middle of the day? and they both break out in that way in hot weather."

"No," said the doctor, with quiet positiveness, "it was the scarlet rash, and it has disappeared, when it should be on the surface; that is why this little fellow is suffering so. But you must keep up good courage; the cases are serious, but by no means hopeless; I told you the worst at once, because I know you are a sensible woman, and want the truth." Then he wheeled

round to Caroline. "Have you had the scarlet fever?" he asked.

She shook her head; at that moment it would have been impossible to speak.

"Then of course you know the probabilities are you will have it?"

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Brinker. "Oh, dear, dear me! not only us, but we are getting other people into trouble! Whatever will her mother do?"

Still Caroline said nothing; not yet could she trust her voice, and there was no telling what that dreadful lump in her throat would do if she but opened her mouth to let it have its way.

"Don't borrow trouble, my friend," said the doctor, turning back to her with a reassuring smile; "there is enough trouble in the world without looking ahead for some which may never come. Not every one who is exposed to scarlet fever takes it, by any means, and the fact that this little woman has lived so long and escaped speaks well for her."

It was ten minutes later, when the doctor had given once more the careful directions, and promised to come in at evening and see if all was being done that could be, that Caroline followed him to the door, her face almost as white as the steps on which she stood, but her voice controlled.

"Doctor, I have a little sister at home who is very delicate; mother was told to keep her from all the diseases which people catch as long as possible, and she has never had any of them——"

"Better stay away from her, then," the doctor said promptly, before she had time to put her dread question into words.

If it had been possible for her to have grown paler,

she would have done so. "But how can I?" she gasped; "it is home, and I was going to-day. My mother never meant me to come away, and I never meant to, and I've nowhere else; and if I should be sick——"

"Now you are borrowing trouble," he said, smiling; "you may not be sick; I think it quite possible you will escape. I can see you have a sound body, capable of resisting poisoned air; but did you never hear the old proverb, 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure'? I'm prescribing the ounce of prevention for the little sister, that is all. As to the staying, I have an idea you will be very welcome indeed in there, and have opportunity to make yourself as useful as I fancy you know how to be; if I am mistaken, come to my house, I will see that you are well cared for. Talk it over with your friends, and I will hear your decision to-night."

"To-night!" echoed Caroline's white lips; that is, they formed as if to say the words, but no sound escaped. How many times had she said, since daylight, "To-night I shall be at home"?

The doctor, three strides away from the steps, turned back to say, "I see Conductor Brinker coming; perhaps you can help explain the situation to him, and save that poor mother; they are a very loving family, and trouble of this form presses them hard. I am afraid there is a heavy trial in store for them." And the doctor, who was so constantly in the homes of sickness and sorrow that some people thought he had become used to them and had ceased to care, drew a long sigh as he sped away. But he had roused Caroline from the first selfishness of her dismay. What, after all, was her trouble compared with theirs? It was only too

evident that the doctor feared the worst. One, perhaps both of their darlings, was in danger; and as for her Daisy, she had but to stay away from her for a few weeks to save her from any possibility of contagion from this source.

It was Caroline's quiet, earnest voice which explained to Conductor Brinker the blow that had fallen on his home during the few short hours since he left it. It was she who assured him that the doctor had said distinctly that they were by no means hopeless cases; it was she who held the baby while his wife cried a few tears on his broad shoulders, and who hushed Daisy's wailing voice, and in low whispered words comforted the child.

Perhaps it was an hour afterwards that the conductor turned to her and said, "I had forgotten that you were to go with me; we shall have to be getting ready. It is very hard that a man must leave his wife and babies at such a time."

Then Caroline spoke as quietly as though she was not saying a tremendous thing. "If you please, Mr. Brinker, could I stay here, do you think, for a few days? I have been exposed to the fever, you know, and I'm afraid if I go home I shall have it and give it to our Daisy, and she is very delicate. I think mother would want me to stay and go to a hospital or somewhere, rather than expose Daisy."

"Can you stay?" the conductor said, with a sudden lighting up of his strong, troubled face; and before he could say more his wife added, "Not an angel from heaven could be more welcome; she has been that, Brinker, all this dreadful night. I don't see how I could have gotten through it without her."

"If you will stay," said the conductor, "it will be

such a blessing as I did not believe this day could bring. We'll never forget it of you—never, and I don't believe you will have the fever, either; I can't seem to feel that you will be let to have it."

"I think mother will want me to stay," said Caroline, her voice trembling a little. This dreadful thing, which she had had such trouble to speak of, seemed to be decided by others.

"I cannot tell until I hear from her just what to do, but I think I ought to stay until she knows about it."

And this was the reason Conductor Brinker went westward without her, and went on from the Junction to explain why she was not there.

CHAPTER XI.

DARK DAYS.

"WHY, you see, ma'am," the conductor was saying to Mrs. Bryant, "the trouble is just this: my little ones have got the scarlet fever. They have been ailing for a week, and their mother thought they had bad colds, and the baby teething, too; but it seems all the time it was the fever coming on them, and they have got it bad. Before my train left this morning I took time to run over to the doctor's, and he shook his head, and says he, 'My friend, I don't know how it will go; we will make as brave a fight as we can, but I am an honest man, and will be perfectly frank with you, and tell you that there is great danger.' Those were his very words, and you may judge how a father felt to listen to them."

"Poor father!" said Mrs. Bryant gently, putting aside her own great anxiety in her sympathy for this troubled stranger. He felt the earnest kindness of the tone, and suddenly choked and drew the back of his hand across his eyes. Then, struggling to regain self-control, he went on with his story: "And your Caroline, she thought of her little sister, like the woman that she is, and wrote you a note, which, after all, will explain better than I can." He dashed the tears from

his eyes with one hand, while with the other he fumbled in his vest-pocket and drew forth a neatly-folded sheet, which Mrs. Bryant reached for eagerly. Ben looked over her shoulder while she read:—

"DEAR, DARLING MOTHER,—What did you think had become of me? And, oh! what will you say when you see Mr. Brinker, and me not with him? Dear mother, I don't know what to do, but it seems to me you will think I am doing right, because our precious Daisy must not have scarlet fever, you know. Shall I stay, mother? I can help them very much, I know I can, and they need help. They have been very kind to me. I can take all the care of the one who is not sick—her name is Daisy—don't you think—and help about the others. Will it not be the right way to do?

"Dear mother, and Ben, and Daisy darling, I need not try to tell how hard it is for me to stay away from you when I almost ran away in the first place; only people who run away from home generally want to go, don't they? and I'm sure I was never in a greater hurry to do anything that night than I was to get home. How long ago it seems! And it was only Saturday night, and to-day is Monday. Oh, dear mother! what shall I do? Send me word by Mr. Brinker whether I have done right, and just what to do."

Of course you know how it ended. Oh, they talked about it a long time, and counselled with Mr. Holden, and listened to Mrs. Kedwin when she said impulsively that if it was "her Fanny" she would have her come home right straight off. It wasn't likely she would get the fever; people often didn't, and what if she did? Daisy might as well have it now as any time, and they would feel dreadfully if Line took it and died away from home; folks did sometimes die with it, especially if they were as old as Line before they had it.

Mrs. Bryant was very pale and quiet under this flow of words. Some of them she mercifully did not hear at all; but she turned when Mr. Holden said,—

"What we need to decide is, what will it be right for Caroline to do just now? The consequences of right doing we must leave in the Heavenly Father's hands."

Then Mrs. Bryant smiled; that language she understood. So Conductor Brinker went back to Philadelphia on the midnight train, carrying with him the little old trunk that had stood on a framework made for it in the loft of the woodshed ever since Daisy could remember; now it was packed full with Caroline's neat, scant wardrobe.

"It is well it is so small, isn't it, mother?" Daisy said, with a grave face, as she tucked a little private bundle of her own make-up in a vacant corner. "We can fill it full, and it will look like a great many things. Oh, mother, how strange it seems to be packing Line's things!" and the little lips quivered pitifully.

"It is only for a little while, darling," the mother said cheerfully; "keep up a brave heart. In three weeks at the utmost I think Caroline can come home, unless——"

She did not finish her sentence, and turned away quickly lest Daisy should see the tears. How could she say, "Unless Caroline should herself take the fever"? "If she does," thought the mother firmly, "I must go to her, whatever it costs." But this thought she kept, with many another one, quite to herself. I will not try to tell you about the weeks which followed. Caroline is not likely ever to forget them; but then she had to live them, and since we could not help her do it, of what use to linger over the story? Bubby and the baby were both very ill indeed. The hurried city doctor, who never made more frequent visits than he considered absolutely necessary—who, indeed, often

offended his patients because when they wanted to see him most he sometimes decided that they could do very well without him, and stayed away—came twice a day regularly to the unpretentious brick house, set in a row precisely like hundreds of other houses, and stayed long sometimes, watching the effect of some mysterious potion which he had given. There were three dreadful days when he came three times, and one awful night when he sat until midnight, much of the time with his skilled fingers on the pulse of the suffering baby, his keen eyes watching for the slightest change in his patient. Very little talking was done during these weeks. Mrs. Brinker was for the most part absorbed in her children, and gave them every bit of strength she had. Her attempts at conversation rarely went farther than to ask, "How do they seem to you now?" or "Did the doctor say anything more when you went to the door with him? Do you think he has given up hope of baby?"

Nearly always those attempts at talk ended with the words, "What should I do without you? I declare for it, Caroline, I never was so sure that the Lord thought about people and planned for them, as I have been about this; I couldn't take care of two at once, as sick as they are, now could I? And Brinker has to be away. Railroads must run, you know, just the same as ever, and people must go and come if all the babies in Philadelphia are dying. Doesn't it seem strange that folks care to go anywhere when Bubby and baby are so sick? What was I saying? Oh! I don't know and can't imagine what I would have done if you hadn't stayed. Let alone the sick ones, what would have become of Daisy?" For Daisy, whenever Caroline could spare time from the

sick ones, became her special charge. She was very unlike the Daisy at home, but she bore the same name; and the homesick girl loved her at first for that reason solely, but bestowed such care and thought upon her that it ended in her loving the little girl most heartily for herself alone. Sometimes it seemed wonderful to her, the way she had taken the little Brinkers into her heart. "It is almost as bad as having Daisy or Ben sick," she told herself one night, with a queer little catch in her breath. "Almost, but oh, dear! not quite. Still, if baby should die, and I am afraid he will——" And then her heart would beat with great thuds.

There is one hour that stands out in Caroline Bryant's memory more keenly vivid than any other. She remembers every little insignificant thing about the room—the way the chairs were set, and the picture-book which Miss Webster sent to the Philadelphia Daisy, lying where it had fallen face downward, when she left it in answer to a sudden call; even the way the curtain was looped back to let in the grey dawn of the morning has photographed itself upon her memory. The presentiment or impression of some coming change was upon her. Unskilled as she was in sickness, she knew that the baby was different from what he had been before; whether the change was for the better, or whether the dreaded end was coming, she did not know. She had not dared to speak a word to the mother, but she felt, rather than knew, that the same impression was on her mind; and the father had for that one morning secured a substitute, and did not leave the house when the ten o'clock train sent out the usual warning whistle.

"I'm not going out until the doctor comes," he said

to Caroline; "not if there's no train leaves Philadelphia to-day!"

"But what will you do?" asked the girl, with a startled look in her eyes. This man, who was so faithful and conscientious in regard to his duties, who had left them sometimes in their tireless watch when it fairly tore his heart in two—had much watching and anxiety made his steady brain lose its balance, so that he did not realise the importance of his position? All this was in Caroline's mind while she waited. The conductor glanced toward his wife to make sure she was not listening, and then said,—

"I went out in the night and got changed off with a friend; it is his resting time, but he's going for me."

"Then you think," said Caroline, "I mean you feel——" and there she stopped.

"Yes," he said, his eyes dropping to the floor, "there is some change; I don't know what it is——" And then the quick step of the doctor was heard outside, and Caroline stepped to open the door. There was utmost stillness while he bent over baby, and then he turned with a smile on his face and held out his hand to Mr. Brinker: "My friend, I have good news for you; I believe the danger is over." And then Mrs. Brinker, strong-nerved, sensible woman as she was, did what she had never done before in her life, she fainted. Perhaps it was just as well that the others had to restrain their feelings, and run to pick her up and give her water and fan her, otherwise I do not know what might have happened.

"We all felt so queer" [wrote Caroline to Ben] "that it seemed as though we could not act naturally; and we were a little bit frightened about Mrs. Brinker, too; she never faints, and it lasted a good while. If the baby had not raised up and cried just when

he did, I don't know what we should have done; but the moment she heard his voice she was on her feet again, and staggered over to him, though she was just as white as the wall. The doctor smiled and said, 'I thought that would bring her back; there is nothing like mother love.'"

Over this Ben looked grave. "Mother," he said, after a little silence, "Line talks exactly as though she belonged to those people, and always had. Did you notice how she says, 'Mrs. Brinker never faints'? How does she know what she is in the habit of doing?"

Mrs. Bryant laughed pleasantly.

"Do you feel the least bit jealous of Mrs. Brinker, my son?" she asked playfully. "It is quite natural for young people to fall into such habits of expression at Caroline's age. A few days or a few weeks seem like a lifetime, especially if the circumstances are such as to make deep impression. I knew a young girl who said of her friend, 'He always wears his hair that way; I never saw him comb it in any other fashion,' and when cross-questioned she was obliged to admit that she had seen him but three times in her life. But I have not the least fear that our Line will forget any of us, or put the Brinkers in our places. Can we not rejoice with those that rejoice, my dear boy?"

Ben blushed a little as he said quickly, "I do, mother. I am sure I am very glad for them and for us; I suppose we shall soon have Line at home." For Line had escaped the disease, it was hoped and believed.

"Yes," said Mrs. Bryant, smiling brightly, "I think we may soon claim her now. Of course she could not leave while the children are so ill. It would have been cruel, when they took a fancy to her, and would allow

her to help the over-burdened mother; I can well imagine how helpful she has been. Dear girl, she was always to be depended upon; I scarcely knew how much until since I have had to miss her help instead of receive it. I told her in my last letter to ask the doctor how soon it would be prudent for her to come, and in her next I think she will be able to give us the date; she could not be expected to think, even, of home-coming in this letter, her heart was too full of joy over the babies."

Alas for their hopes! The next letter plunged Ben into the depths of despair; and even gentle little Daisy, who always tried to look on the bright side of things, shed a few tears; as for Mrs. Bryant, she said not a word for the first five minutes after reading the letter aloud. Poor Daisy, who, it was believed, had also escaped the dread disease, had been taken with it, and though not, as yet, so alarmingly ill as the others had been, was still sick enough to demand constant care from her mother, who was thus obliged to leave the care of Bubby and the baby largely to Caroline.

"Besides" [wrote the heavily-burdened young woman], "Daisy is very much attached to me, and cries when I can't come to tell her a story before she goes to sleep. She has never had anybody to tell her stories before—Mrs. Brinker says she doesn't know how—and Daisy has become used to them, and thinks they are wonderful. And so, mother, I cannot feel that you would want me to leave just now; in fact, it would not be possible unless they could get some help, for of course Mrs. Brinker cannot manage alone. It is worse than it was at first, because Daisy was really a great deal of help with the baby.

"I ought to stay, mother, oughtn't I? Oh, dear! I do not dare to tell you how dreadfully disappointed I am! It sounds too selfish, I know you will think so."

"I don't think any such thing!" burst forth Ben, as

he read this sentence aloud again. "The idea! She goes on precisely as though she were bound to stay and take care of those folks; it would not be possible for her to come home until they get help! I call that ridiculous! What would they have done if Line had never gone there? As she never would have done if it had not been for that idiot of a Rufus Kedwin. I'd like to shake him this minute!"

"Softly, softly, my son!" cautioned his mother, while Daisy looked at him in amazement; she had never heard good-natured, self-controlled Ben go on in this way before.

"Well, but, mother, don't you call that absurd? What is Line to those people, or they to her? It was just an accident that took her there in the first place."

"Such an accident as God understood and overruled, Ben, my boy, don't you think so? As for what Line is to them, are they not her neighbours for the present? Do you really think she ought to pass by on the other side when they are in their present straits?"

"I think we need Line at home," grumbled Ben, who for once had allowed self to get the upper hand, and could not bring it into subjection. "It is almost a month since she went away—over three weeks, anyhow—and people all asking where she is! I think you need her, mother, as much as Mrs. Brinker does."

"Oh, no, you don't, my son! Thank God, we are well and at peace; and the home where she is has at least its share of trouble. I think, my dear boy, you are tired and disappointed, and hardly know what you are saying. You would be ashamed of your sister if she were to desert now, after all she has been through."

"Then you are really going to tell her to stay?"

"I will leave it to you; I have been able to trust to your judgment in the past. If, after thinking it over, and especially praying over it, you believe I ought to tell her to come home, I think I may promise to do so. Will you take until to-morrow morning to consider it?"

"No, ma'am," said Ben, after a silence of less than two minutes, and his troubled face broke into a half-ashamed smile. "Forgive me, mother; I was cross and unreasonable. I think I knew all the time that Line ought to stay; and that is what made it so hard to bear, because I knew I would have to give in."

It was found that the doctor was decidedly of Caroline's opinion; she ought to stay for the present. "Besides," he added, when she had gravely gone over with him the objections to her return home, to each of which he had nodded assent, "you are exposed again to the disease, you must remember; and although you will probably not take it, we must face the possible with brave hearts and be ready for it."

CHAPTER XII.

"SO YOU WANT TO GO HOME?"

YES, Mrs. Bryant had faced that possibility with a sinking heart the moment she read the news of Daisy's illness. Ben and the little sister in their eagerness or ignorance had not thought of it; not so the mother. She realised that Caroline worn with watching and unusual responsibility would be a much more probable victim than Caroline fresh from home and in good health and strength.

"But that part we must leave," she said to Mr. Holden. "It is very clear to me that the dear child is doing right, for it would go harder with the sick one if she were fretted by Caroline's leaving her; it might even increase the fever to such an extent as to endanger her life. I dare not recall my daughter; but it is very hard to leave her there. If I could only go myself and save her strength, and see that she takes care of herself!"

"That is another thing you must leave," Mr. Holden said brightly. "Is it not a blessed thing, Mrs. Bryant, that you and I have a sure resting place in our perplexities and burdens?"

"Do you have any burdens?" she asked the quiet-faced minister.

A curious look as of a pain which he must hide swept across his face for a moment, even as he smiled. "Every heart knoweth its own bitterness," he said. "We have the Lord's word for that."

"I ran away from this disease with Caroline when she was a baby," Mrs. Bryant said gravely, after a moment of silence. "I was thinking last night how much better it might have been, possibly, now, if I had not done so."

Then Mr. Holden laughed outright. "That is borrowing trouble, certainly," he said. "I have known many people to borrow from the future, but I think it is rather new to try to borrow from the past. Dear friend, how can you be sure you would have any daughter Caroline on this side if you had not tried to shield her to the best of your knowledge and conscience?"

"That is true," she answered, and her smile was free again. "I suppose no one borrows trouble on all sides more foolishly than a mother; but indeed, Mr. Holden, this new disappointment in regard to Caroline has almost unnerved me; I am used to having my children in the nest. I was so sure that my daughter could not go away from home this winter; I tried to plan for ways and means for her to make a visit, and when I decided that it could not be done, there was an undertone of gladness over the thought that the family circle would be unbroken."

But the Brinkers were not destined to have so hard an experience this time. Daisy was "sick enough," her mother said, "but she didn't hold a candle to the other." By which, I suppose, Mrs. Brinker meant to convey the impression that although Daisy certainly suffered some pain and much weariness, she was by no

means so sick as her little brothers had been; though why the good woman thought "holding a candle" had anything to do with it, must be explained by those who have fallen into the habit of using slang phrases, instead of good English.

But if the illness was not so severe, Daisy was almost longer than the others in getting well, and was so weak and nervous that a mere hint in regard to Caroline's going away would serve to throw her into a crying fit, sure to be followed by more or less fever. So it was that the two weeks to which the poor girl had limited herself had more than passed away, and still the day was not set for her home-going.

"I really think, daughter, that you may conscientiously fix the date now," her mother wrote. "The little girl, you say, is gaining every day; it is surely time for her to begin to exercise self-control, and remember that you have been long away from your own Daisy. Tell her how patiently and uncomplainingly your little sister, her namesake, has given you up to her for all these weeks, and yet how eagerly she watches the mails in hope of hearing good news of your coming; perhaps it will help Daisy Brinker to grow unselfish herself; not that I would censure the poor little girl; indeed, I think she shows good sense in wanting my Caroline by her side as long as possible. Mother knows just how much she misses you, daughter, but she can never put it into words."

This letter, full of sweetness though it was, made Caroline feel, as she expressed it to herself, "ready to fly"; she went downstairs resolved to ask the doctor that very day if he thought it would do any harm to set Daisy Brinker to crying in real earnest over her departure. She and the doctor had become very good

friends during all these weeks; not that they said much to each other—at least, Caroline had never realised that much had been said to her; the doctor was always in as much haste as the condition of his patients would admit, and confined his talking chiefly to very careful directions connected with them. Nevertheless, he had observed the quiet, womanly, quick-motioned young stranger, and knew more about her than she could have imagined possible; also he had occasionally asked a question or two, with a view to drawing her out, and was really fairly well acquainted with the Bryant family and their circumstances, though the questions had been so far apart, and apparently so disconnected, that Caroline had no suspicion of the truth.

"So you want to go home?" he said, wheeling around from the last step to look at her; it was on the white doorsteps that she had to carry on most of her conversations with the doctor.

"Why should you be in haste to go there? I should think, now that there is a possibility of your being out of prison, you would want to stay and see a little of our great city. It is unusual for people to spend six weeks in Philadelphia, and not go a block away from the house where they are staying."

Caroline laughed pleasantly. "I suppose so," she said; "but the truth is, I want to see mother, and Ben, and Daisy, more than all the cities in the world put together.

"Then you really are very homesick?" he asked, eyeing her so keenly that she blushed, and was troubled, she hardly knew why.

"I want to go home very much indeed, if that is what you mean," she said; "I was never away from mother before, and you know I did not intend to be

this time. Do you think it will hurt Daisy if I begin to plan to go?"

"I was not thinking of Daisy," was the curious answer, and the great man still stood looking thoughtfully at her.

"I was—well, perhaps I will not speak of it now, I have hardly time;" he drew his watch as he spoke, and seemed startled over the lateness of the hour.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he said, after a moment's silence. "I am in haste now, and so are you; I hear Daisy calling you, she considers you essential to her comfort, you see; but I want to have a little talk with you, more at leisure. If you will come round to my house this afternoon, say at three o'clock, I shall be at leisure, perhaps, for a few minutes, and I will be able to tell you then what I think about this home-going. It is true I may not be able to see you, I may not be at home; a doctor has no time of his own, you know, but if you care to try it, I will be there if I can."

Much wondering, and not a little disappointed, Caroline promised, and went back to Daisy with a grave face. "I almost believe he thinks I ought not to go for another week," she said to herself; "but I do not see why. Daisy is growing real strong now, and he said he was not thinking of her, any way. It can't be that he thinks I will have the fever even yet; the time is surely past! Oh, dear! I suppose I can wait another week even if I must; but it does seem to me sometimes as though I can't."

It was quite an event in her day, this getting ready to go to the doctor's at three o'clock. As the hour drew near she dressed herself with great care, and thought how strange it was that she should be planning to go out on a city street and call on one of the great

doctors. What could he possibly want to say to her? If Ben were only here to go with her, how nice it would be! She had much trouble getting off; poor Daisy, who had had her own way exactly for a fortnight, save where the doctor was concerned, made herself and everybody about her as uncomfortable as possible over the dreary fact that her dear Caroline was going out walking, and she must be left at home. She cried, and refused to be comforted; and her mother, who at first coaxed, and petted, and promised to amuse her every minute until Caroline should return, finally lost all patience, and called Daisy a selfish little girl, who had forgotten there was anybody in the world but Daisy Brinket, and said in plain words that she was ashamed of her. This return to plain speaking seemed to do the little girl good; Caroline had the satisfaction of noting that the low fretful wail had quite ceased before she closed the front door.

As she rang the bell at the doctor's door, and stood waiting to be admitted, she naturally thought of that Sunday evening, now seeming so far in the past, when she had stood here ringing and waiting. How many strange and utterly unexpected, and really dreadful, things had happened since then! Suppose somebody had told her, that night, that six weeks afterwards she would be ringing that same bell, and would not in all those weeks have had a glimpse of mother, and Ben, and Daisy? She would have looked at the person with horror, and assured him that such a thing could not possibly be; that she was going home to-morrow. Yet here she was! Still, it was not all unpleasant; there was in Caroline's heart a satisfied feeling that she had been a very useful person during these trying weeks, and now that they were over she could afford

to be glad. "I am sure I do not know what poor Mrs. Brinker would have done without me," she said to herself; and it was no more than that good woman echoed in her hearing many times a day. Oh, they were grateful, and would never forget it of her, never! Conductor Brinker was anxious to convince her of that fact. "Besides," said Caroline, with a gratified smile creeping over her face, "I know a great doctor, now—know him pretty well. Think of my standing out on the steps asking him questions!" The smile became broader as she remembered with what fear and trembling she had stood there on that first evening. How she had dreaded to speak at all, and had tried to plan just what words she should use. Now, although she had an immense respect for the doctor, the feeling of almost terror had passed. She was able to answer his questions without stammering, and generally to look into his face when she spoke without blushing. Visions of long talks with Fanny Kedwin and Rufus, in which she would describe this doctor and his house, and his carriage, and the numbers of people who were always in waiting in the reception room, came to her pleasantly. Fanny Kedwin had been rather fond of talking about her uncle, Dr. Freeman, who drove two horses, and was sometimes called to the city ten miles away in consultation. Caroline did not know how many horses Dr. Forsythe kept, but she knew he was consulted during every minute of his office hours, and she had heard people wonder when Dr. Forsythe ate or slept.

"He is one of the biggest doctors in the city," Conductor Brinker explained, "and he won't go into the more fashionable part of the city to live either, because this is a handy place for people to get at him,

and because some who are poor would not dare to send for him if he lived far away. He is very good to poor people; charges them less than the second-rate doctors, and shows them more attention."

That he had shown the sick children at Conductor Brinker's the most patient attention, Caroline could witness, and every word she heard about him but added to her sense of his greatness; yet here she was, coming by his own direction to have a few minutes' talk with him!

She was in the reception room by this time, which to her astonishment was empty. The young man smiled in answer to her look of surprise, and said, "The doctor's office hours are over, but he told me to admit you and ask you to wait. You are Caroline Bryant, I think?"

Caroline, as she sank into a sofa, asked herself if it could be that she really was Caroline Bryant, and what Fanny Kedwin and Rufus would say when she described this room to them; and then her heart began to beat so hard at the thought of seeing them perhaps in two more days, that it almost took her breath away.

"The doctor has been called out," the young man had explained, "but he hopes not to be long gone, and you are to wait if you can." Then he had left her to the silence and elegance of the room. It was in reality a large, plainly furnished room, fitted up with conveniences for waiting people; but to Caroline it looked very grand indeed.

Very softly the door opened—so softly that the young girl who had drawn aside the heavy curtains, and was looking out upon the busy street, did not hear it. A small slight figure, with a shower of short curls about her face, the colour of the sunlight, came on

slippered feet into the room, and, pausing midway, gazed with a curious mixture of shyness and thoughtfulness upon the stranger. Even on this winter day she was dressed in white—a soft white wool, belted by a broad band of white ribbon; her face, too, was white, not a touch of colour about her anywhere. To Caroline's startled eyes, when at last something made her turn her head, the child looked something as an angel might.

"Are you Caroline?" asked the little white spirit, speaking in a slow, low voice. "I am Dorothy Forsythe, and papa said I was to entertain you until he came."

Whereupon Caroline smiled reassuringly and held out her hand. "Yes," she said, "I am Caroline, and I like to be entertained. How are you going to do it?"

"I don't know. I might show you pictures. Do you like pictures? Or we might talk; I like to talk myself."

"Very well," said Caroline, "by all means let us talk. What do you like to talk about?"

"All sorts of things. I suppose I like to talk better than other people because I cannot run and play like other children. I have to walk carefully, and but a little way at a time, and I cannot ever run. I am not like other children."

The voice in which these sad words were said was very quiet and self-controlled. It was as if she was merely stating a fact in which she had no personal interest of any sort; but Caroline was startled and shocked.

"Oh, poor little girl!" she said. "What is the matter?"

"It is something about my heart," said Dorothy, in the same quiet, matter-of-fact tone. "It has always been so; papa has tried and tried to cure me, but he cannot, and by-and-bye I cannot walk any more at all, he thinks. And I must never run, he says, until I get to heaven. I shall be quite well there, you know."

"Yes," said Caroline, low-voiced, and shading her eyes that the child might not see the tears which were gathering in them. The little thing could not be older than her Daisy; and as she thought of Daisy's tripping feet this story seemed too sad.

"Do not cry," said Dorothy gravely. "I never do any more; not about this. I made up my mind not to, because it makes mamma feel worse, and mamma is sick and has to be taken care of. Papa depends upon me not to let her feel worse about anything; so I do not cry any more. It does no good, you know. If it would make me run and hop, I suppose I could cry for a whole week; but it only hinders, so what is the use?"

"That is true," said Caroline, and she choked back her tears and smiled. What a curious little fairy philosopher this was!

"I think you may talk to me if you will," said Dorothy, beginning again before her guest could say more. "I like to be talked to, and I don't have it very often. Papa has not time, and mamma is sick, and nurse—well, nurse is good, but she does not know how to talk about some things. For instance, she does not know what they do at school; nurse never went to school when she was little, and she cannot think what they find to do all day—little girls as young as I, you know—and she and I have wondered and wondered, until she is tired of it; but I am not. I want to know all about it. Could you tell me some things?"

The wistfulness in the tones was almost too much for Caroline's tears; she had never heard anything which seemed to her so pitiful, but she held them back with resolute will, and began to describe, in detail, a day in school as she had often lived it, Dorothy sinking on a low cushioned seat in front of her and listening like one fascinated.

They were interrupted by the sound of a key in the lock, and a quick step in the hall. "That is papa," said Dorothy, rising at once; "I must go now. He cannot be hindered when there are people in this room waiting for him; I shall tell him you entertained me beautifully, and I hope—oh! I do hope you can finish the story for me some time."

She clasped her hands with a sort of suppressed eagerness as she spoke, and then slowly, softly, moved away, reaching the door just as Dr. Forsythe opened it. He stooped and kissed her without speaking, then advanced toward Caroline.

"Well," he said, "I had to keep you waiting, after all; but you have made acquaintance with my Dorothy, I see. Now I must talk fast"—he looked at his watch as he spoke. "I had hoped to have more time, and make my suggestions a little less abruptly, but there are those waiting for me who need my help, and I must just plunge into the subject at once. This little girl, whom I feel sure you have enjoyed, is our only one, and is the frailest flower that blooms, I am afraid. It is only by utmost care that we have kept her here at all; we cannot hope to keep her for many years. You do not need to be told that she is very peculiarly dear to us, and that we long to gratify all her desires. One of them is to go to school—to a regular school such as other children attend; she has been brave and unselfish

in this desire, but no home governess or home study has been able to meet her evident longing wish in this matter. We would like to gratify her, and have been afraid to. Her mother is an invalid, and her whole frail life seems bound up in this little girl; she does not like to trust her out of her sight, and yet is too ill to have her with her very much.

"There is a school, a semi-Kindergarten for children who have outgrown the Kindergarten age; I should like to send her to it. There are some reasons why I believe it would be good for her to mingle with other children, and see how they live, and what they have to do, and be; but we dare not trust her with a servant. The school is a mile away from my house. I could take her to and from it in my carriage if I could command my time, but I cannot; she could go in a street car, if there were some one always with her whom we trusted. Some one to see that she did not walk too fast, or step too suddenly, or sit in a draught, or be wrapped too warmly, or not warmly enough; in short, some one who would think for her, and care for her as an older sister who loved her might do. She would also need a loving oversight while at school, such as that same older sister could give. The trouble is, she has no sister." The sentence closed with a smile so grave and wistful that Caroline, who had been looking earnestly at him, felt a strong desire to cry. But his next words checked the tears, and made her heart beat fast.

"You would like to know why I am telling you all this. It is because I have thought that you might find it in your heart to take the place of that sister which my little girl so greatly needs. The Kindergarten department of which I told you is connected with an

excellent school for girls of your age, and if you would stay here this winter, and undertake the care of our darling, we would send you to this school, clothe you properly, and give you in every respect the comforts and advantages of a home, and pay you a dollar a week for your spending money. Now what do you say? Will it be of any use for me to write to your mother, or must you go home?"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

IN Mrs. Bryant's kitchen utmost order reigned. Not only the kitchen, but the little shop, as well as the study, which the initiated will remember all belonged to one room, wore an air of expectancy. The very dollies in the pretty show window seemed to be listening, and their sweet puckered lips looked almost ready to say, "We believe she is coming! We think we hear her step!"

As for Daisy Bryant, nervousness had almost gotten the better of her. She had wiped the dishes, and helped to set them away; she had dusted every article of furniture in the "suite" of rooms; she had arranged and re-arranged the dollies until she was sure they made as good an exhibit as possible, and there was literally nothing else to busy herself about. What could she do but watch the slow-moving hands of the slow old clock, and walk back and forth from the window to her little chair in the study, and hold herself by main force of will from either shouting or crying? In her highly-wrought nervous condition she felt almost equally ready for either.

The condition of things was just this: the Bryant family had elected that this was the day on which their

Caroline was to arrive. So certain were they of this, that one of the precious chickens of Daisy's own raising had been killed and dressed, and was at that moment gently stewing on the back part of the shining stove, making itself ready for the five o'clock grand dinner which they meant to have in honour of the home-coming. Some delicious Spitzenberg apples were sputtering at one another in the oven, making ready for the same feast; there were potatoes just ready to pop into the kettle to be boiled, and Mother Bryant was at that moment engaged in putting the finishing touches to a wonderful rice pudding which she knew how to make delicious, without eggs or cream. Oh! the dinner was to be everything that heart could desire; the only question was, would she be there to eat it?

They had discussed it in all its probabilities at the breakfast table that morning, Ben and Daisy with the assurance of their years, and the mother coming in with her notes of warning. "Remember, children, she has not written positively that she would come to-day."

"No; but, mother, what could hinder her any longer? I am sure she has been long enough, and of course she is in a hurry. The little girl is better, and you know she said she was almost certain the doctor would say yes; and if he did she would surely start this morning. Of course she would not need to wait to write; she would know well enough that I would meet every single train."

"All true, Ben dear, but many things might occur to hinder her. The conductor might have reasons why he thought it better for her to wait until to-morrow, or the doctor might suggest her waiting for reasons of his own. Perhaps it is not probable, but what I

want you to remember is, that it is better not to be certain of things."

"I like to be certain," said Ben, speaking almost crossly—he was so anxious to see Caroline, poor fellow! "We have been kept on uncertainties long enough."

As for Daisy, she had no arguments to put into words, and could only say, with a curious little catch in her breath, which told the watchful mother how much her heart was set upon it, "I think she will come to-day, mother; I do indeed."

And now it was nearing the hour when she ought in all reasonableness to be expected, if the day was to bring her. It had been a long, nervous one to get through with. The little family watched for the ten and three o'clock mails, half uncertain whether to hope for or to fear a letter; but when none arrived their hopes grew strong; even the mother allowed her heart to say, "The dear child must surely be coming to-day." Ben had announced, as he dashed in to report no letter in the three o'clock mail, that he should not come home again until he brought Line with him. "I shall go straight to the station from the office," he announced gleefully; "and as soon as our four feet can bring us you may expect to see us walk in. Have your nose at the window-pane, Daisylinda, for Line will want to see it the first thing."

Little need to urge her to that. The small nose began to flatten itself against the pane nearly an hour before the train was even due, though Mrs. Bryant had nearly worn herself out with schemes for keeping her little daughter busily employed.

"You begin to think she will truly come, don't you, mother?"

The undertone of plaintiveness in the question went to the mother's heart. Daisy was frailer than usual this winter. Some way her colds, which were always things to be dreaded, had worn upon her more than ever before; she had a slight one now, which was the reason why she must forego the eagerly-planned pleasure of meeting Line at the depot.

"We will think so, darling, at least. And yet, mother does not like to see her little girl set her heart so much upon it. Don't you remember that if she should not come it will be because our Father thought it best she should not?"

"Oh, yes'm!" said Daisy, with a visible quiver in her lips; "but I like to think He wants her to come to-day, because we do need her so."

Then the train whistled, and the mother was glad; at least this suspense would be over in a little while. It seemed a long while. The apples sputtered themselves done, and had to be taken up, and even the potatoes, which were not expected to be done just yet, insisted on receiving attention, before Daisy at the window announced that Ben was coming; she heard his step around the corner. Then, in a minute more, "He has turned the corner; and, oh, mother! he is alone."

"Never mind, dear," said Mrs. Bryant, going quickly to the window to put loving arms around her little girl and kiss her trembling lips. "Perhaps Ben has a letter which will tell us all about it, and we shall have the fun of getting ready for her all over again to-morrow."

"She didn't come," said Ben, as he flung open the door; "but here's a letter. I had to wait for ever for the mail to be distributed." Then the poor fellow

turned away, and actually tried to hide his bitter disappointment in a whistle or two, while his mother tore open the letter. Of course you want to hear it almost as badly as they did.

"PHILADELPHIA, *December*, 18—.

"MY DARLING MOTHER, AND BEN, AND DAISY,—To think that I am sitting down writing to you instead of putting the last things into my trunk, as I expected to be! Oh, mother, I don't know how to tell it, and I don't know what to do." ["Do!" burst forth Ben, in uncontrollable indignation. "Why in the name of all that is sensible doesn't she come home? I wouldn't wait another hour for any little girl or doctor in the world." "Oh, please to listen, Ben!" pleaded Daisy, and the mother continued.] "It is such a strange thing to tell, and seems so kind of tangled up in my mind; I want to begin at the end and work my way back to the beginning, somehow, but I guess I won't. I'll make it tell itself like a story, then Daisy will like to hear it. I went to Dr. Forsythe's yesterday afternoon, as I told you I was to do, and I had the longest time to wait in the parlour—he had to go out, after all, though he meant to be at home to see me. While I waited the loveliest little girl I ever saw in my life, except, of course, my own darling Daisy, came and talked to me. She said she was Dorothy Forsythe, and that she was 'not like other little girls'; there is something the matter with her heart. She has never been to school, and she wants to go very much. Her father said it was the desire of his heart to indulge her, because he could not hope to have her many years. Just think! although he is so great a doctor, he cannot cure his own little girl." [To save his life, Ben could not help interrupting again, with a groan of impatience, "Mother! what in the world is she waiting to tell us all that for? Why doesn't she come home?" "Have patience, my boy," said Mrs. Byrant, and read on.] "Oh! I cannot wait to tell you all about it. The doctor came, and was in a hurry, after all, and said he must talk fast, and, mother, he wants me to stay in Philadelphia this winter! There, I have told the end in the middle, after all. He says, if I will he can trust me to take Dorothy to school every morning, and bring her home in the afternoon, and see that she has enough wraps on, and not too many, and that she does not walk too fast, nor get on and off the

cars too quickly ; you see, she is very, very delicate, and her face looks like an angel's, I should think. And he says, if I will stay, he will have me live at his house, and get me all the clothes I need, and send me to school, and let me take music lessons, and pay me a dollar a week for looking after Dorothy. And oh, mother, mother! I want to see you so badly I can hardly wait to write the words ; but he thought—and the worst of it is I thought so too—that I ought to wait and write to you all about it, and he has written this big letter which I enclose. That will tell you the whole story ever so much better than I could, but I knew you would read mine first."

So now they knew why Caroline did not come on the five o'clock train.

There was more to the letter—much more, indeed—but before it could be finished, or the doctor's letter looked at, Mrs. Bryant had to stop and gather her little Daisy in her arms, and try to soothe the most heart-broken fit of crying she had ever seen the child indulge herself in. And the mother was glad of it ; for she felt that tears, however bitter, were better than the still, white-faced way in which Daisy sometimes bore pain. Meantime, Ben walked the floor, and gave vent to his long-pent-up feelings by declaring that he thought "Line Bryant was simply too horrid for anything, and that if she liked little angels and doctors and things better than she did them, she would better let them adopt her, and not come home at all." Nobody paid the slightest attention to what he said, and nobody knew that he did not mean a word of it better than he did himself.

I do not know when they would have got settled down again if it had not been for the chicken, which took that opportunity to stick itself fast to the stewing-pan, and emit an odour which made Mrs. Bryant drop letters and little girl in a heap, as she said, "Oh, our

chicken is burning!" and ran. Ben had to go to the rescue, and bring her a dish and a fork, and put the covers on the stove; and when the excitement was over, it was found that Daisy had dried her eyes, and was ready to hear the rest of the story.

It was later than they had meant it should be when the Bryant family ate their supper. Mrs. Bryant had scrambled the extra plate and knife and fork out of sight, and motioned Ben to set away the extra chair, before she summoned Daisy, who sat holding Arabella Aurelia close to her heart, and clasping Caroline's letter firmly in her left hand. They had certainly plenty to talk about. The solemn question over which each one thought, and nobody cared to put into words, was, Would mother write to Line to stay, or to come home? Ben settled it in his own mind that it would be ridiculous and absurd to think of such a thing. Why, they might as well give Line up altogether! He assured himself that he should express his mind freely, and say that Line ought to have known better than to have waited to ask. Of course she was to come home; and if his mother dreamed of such a thing as telling her to stay, he should think they had all gone crazy together. He argued it all out; how he would controvert his mother's logic, supposing for a moment that she had any on the wrong side, and convince her that the thing was not to be thought of for a moment. He wished she would begin the discussion herself. Twice he opened his mouth to say, "Mother, of course you will write to Line to come home day after to-morrow without fail, will you not?" But a glance at Daisy's pale face, and a realisation of the effort that she was bravely making to shed no more tears, and even eat a little supper, held his impatience in check. The mother, meantime, talked

only of the little Dorothy. She had a little sister once who had heart disease—a beautiful little white sister, who could never run, nor play ball, nor skip the rope, nor swing; and everybody loved her and felt sorry for her, and she died when she was fourteen. Then Mrs. Bryant went on to say that it was certainly a great honour which had been bestowed upon Caroline, to think of entrusting her with such a charge; it showed plainer than anything else could what Dr. Forsythe thought of their dear girl. Then she said, as though it had just occurred to her, "Why, we have not read his letter yet! I will read while you two finish your suppers."

It was a beautiful letter, long and full, with such a description of Dorothy as a great, loving-hearted father, with one little lamb to love, knew how to give, and such words about Caroline as a fond mother would love to read.

Altogether, Ben's excitement quieted a little, and he silently accepted his mother's decision that they would not talk over how to answer the letter until they had prayed and slept over it. Daisy, apparently, was very willing not to talk; she looked pale and tired—excitement and disappointment had worn her out. She was quite willing to take Arabella Aurelia and go early to bed.

When the last things for the night had been done, and Ben turned away from bolting the door to meet his mother's gaze, and she stood up beside him, not in a protecting, but a caressing way, and leaned her head against his broad shoulder as if for support, and said, "Oh, Ben, dear! what shall mother do? Can you help her to be unselfish, and make a wise choice for her daughter—one that she will not regret afterwards?"—

instead of breaking forth into a tirade as to the absurdity and impossibility of the whole scheme, Ben flushed, and hesitated, and choked a little, and at last said huskily, "It is very hard on you, mother, and on us, but it is a rare chance for Line, I suppose; she has a talent for music, and the city schools are——" He stopped just there; he felt that he had said every word he could, and had admitted a great deal.

Of course there were many things to be considered before such an important letter could be answered. Ben did not expect to sleep a wink that night, and even poor little Daisy whispered to Arabella Aurelia that they must lie awake and think; but before she had quite finished the whisper she was asleep. As for Ben, he turned over three times, but when he was ready for the fourth turn it was broad daylight. The mother had not fared so well; she made no resolutions as to wakefulness; on the contrary, she told herself that she must put it all aside and get her regular sleep —and she did her best; but from midnight until three o'clock she lay broad awake, and went over the entire ground many times. It was not until the breakfast next morning was well under way that she asked her question,—

"Well, children, when shall we hold our council as to what to say to Caroline?"

Both children were entirely silent.

At last Ben, his face flushing as he spoke, "I'm willing to leave it to you, mother. I know you will do the right thing."

Was not that a beautiful thing for a boy to say? His mother answered him with a fond, appreciative smile, and turned to Daisy.

"What does our little girl say?"

Daisy was even slower than Ben had been. "Of course you know best," she said presently, low-voiced and sweet; "and I mean to be very good, if I can, whatever you decide, because if I should be selfish about my Line it would make me feel ashamed when I met that little Dorothy in heaven."

Mother and son telegraphed a look at each other, and both felt that Daisy had gone to the root of the matter.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Bryant felt that in so important a question as this she ought to have counsel.

"I think I shall call upon Dr. Mather this morning, and ask his advice," she said thoughtfully, after a few minutes of silence.

Ben looked his surprise, but said not a word. Dr. Mather was their pastor, and it was so entirely reasonable a thing to look to him for advice that there seemed no words in which to express surprise; nevertheless Ben, if it had been respectful, would have declared that he would have considered it more appropriate for Dr. Mather to come to his mother for advice.

Truth to tell, Mrs. Bryant had come to her decision by a roundabout road. She found that she wanted very much to know what Mr. Holden would say about it; but to go to him for advice would be discourteous to her pastor. Even though Dr. Mather should never hear of it, as he probably would not, this true woman felt that her own heart would condemn it as a discourtesy, and that was not to be borne. Long thinking over the matter had brought her to that decision,—

"I shall call upon Dr. Mather this morning."

CHAPTER XIV.

CONFLICTING ADVICE.

DR. MATHER was in his study. He frowned upon the servant who brought him word that a woman was waiting to see him. To be sure he had not yet set to work ; in fact, he was only glancing over the morning paper, but then he meant to go to work in a few minutes, and felt that his good intentions ought not to be interrupted.

"Mrs. Bryant ?" he repeated, in a surprised tone. "Doesn't the woman know better than to make calls on me in the morning ? Ask her if it is important."

The messenger returned. "It is somewhat so, she says ; she wants to ask a little advice before the mail closes, but if you are too busy she will wait."

Dr. Mather tossed down his paper. "Oh, well, show her in. I may as well see her now, and have it done with."

And Mrs. Bryant came in. She was a woman of good sense, and knew that an apology was in order for intruding upon her pastor during his study hours ; she made it in few words, and then told her errand briefly.

"Your daughter ? Ah ! let me see. I think I remember her ; her name is Nancy, is it not ?"

"No, sir ; it is Caroline."

"Oh, yes, Caroline! She is a young woman grown, I believe?"

"Not quite," said Mrs. Bryant, and she gave Caroline's age.

"Ah, yes! Well, I am mixing her with some one else, I presume; I have a great many young persons to look after. And you say she has been absent for some time. Has she been employed in this man's family?"

"No, sir," and as briefly as possible the mother went over the story of her anxieties concerning this daughter—a story which she had thought everybody in the town knew.

"Oh, yes!" the minister said again; "I think I have heard something about it. Well, my good lady, I cannot see why you hesitate for a moment. It seems to me a royal opportunity—such a chance, indeed, as comes to a person but once in a lifetime. Of course you will have her stay," he added reassuringly. "To do otherwise would be to throw away a great deal. The schools in Philadelphia are exceptionally good; and to attend them, and at the same time have an opportunity to earn her own living, will of course be the greatest possible relief to you."

"Do you know anything of Dr. Forsythe?" ventured Mrs. Bryant at length.

"Why, of course, my dear madam; I know Dr. Forsythe to be one of the leading physicians of the city of Philadelphia."

"I do not mean in that way, sir; I mean as to his character. Is he a Christian?"

"That indeed I do not know. But of course a man of that stamp, holding the position which he does, is a guarantee for your daughter's safety. You have

nothing to worry about, and everything to be thankful for."

Still Mrs. Bryant lingered, she hardly knew why. She certainly had Dr. Mather's opinion. "She seems very young to go away from home," she faltered at last, thinking aloud rather than speaking to her pastor.

"Oh, well," he said, in a tone which was meant to be reassuring, "girls younger than she have often had to do it; I know dozens who would be glad of the chance she has. The fact is, madam, this is a workaday world, and only a few people can afford to waste opportunities for the sake of a little sentiment."

Then Mrs. Bryant arose with a flush on her face, and a flash in her eyes; but all she said was, "I thank you, sir. Good-morning."

"Good-morning," said the doctor cordially; "I am glad you are to have such a lift; there is a hard winter before the poor, I fear. If I can do anything for you at any time let me know."

He had certainly been kind, and he had undoubtedly spoken the truth; yet Mrs. Bryant, as she went quickly down the steps, was conscious of feeling almost hurt; she could not have put into words why she felt so, and would not if she could. One thing was plain to her: she felt less inclined to write to Caroline to remain than she had when she went up those steps. She walked rapidly, less because the morning was cold, than because she seemed to have a certain amount of bruised feeling to get rid of in some way. At the corner she encountered Mrs. Kedwin, who was going her way, and who began at once to ask questions.

"Did Line come last night? She didn't! Why, dear me, how disappointed you must have been. Fanny and Rufus were wild to go around there, but I

told them to leave you in peace for one night, at least. What's the matter? Line isn't sick, I hope?"

Thus urged, Mrs. Bryant told her story. "Humph!" said Mrs. Kedwin, "you aren't going to let her stay, are you? I wouldn't, if I were you, not by a long sight. We have feelings, I guess, if we are poor; and you don't want your girl to be a common servant any more than I do mine. Line don't think of wanting to do such a thing, does she? She had spirit enough, I always thought; my Fanny would blaze, I tell you, if anybody should make her such an offer."

"She wants to do right," said Mrs. Bryant firmly, and at that moment she felt that she would probably write to her daughter to stay, by all means.

"Of course she does, and she ought to begin by respecting herself and her mother. Why, her grandfather was a minister! The idea of her being a kitchen drudge for any man."

"They do not want her for kitchen work," Mrs. Bryant explained, "and she would not be looked upon as a servant, though that ought not to make any difference to her or to me; we hope our self-respect goes deeper than that, Mrs. Kedwin."

"Oh, now!" said Mrs. Kedwin, "don't you go to being hoodwinked by any such notions; I've heard such talk before, about being looked upon as one of the family, and given privileges, and all that. It goes for nothing; they are the worst kind of masters and mistresses, the folks that go on about such things; I know them. And as for your self-respect, I know you have queer ideas, Mrs. Bryant, but you can't carry them out—not in this world; a servant is a servant, and nothing else, and your Line isn't cut out for one. Don't you go to submitting to it; she might better

work her fingers to the bone here at home. I'm doing it for my Fanny, and I'll work harder yet, if that is possible, to keep her from such a life."

Mrs. Bryant smiled and sighed. She knew then, as she had always known, that she and Mrs. Kedwin did not think alike about any subject under the sun, and that, with the best of intentions, this mother was spoiling her daughter Fanny, filling her with false ideas of life and of respectability, and "working her fingers to the bone" to do it. Nothing which had been said made her feel more like leaving Caroline in Philadelphia, and so withdrawing her from the influence of such companionship as Fanny Kedwin's and others of her stamp. If she only knew what kind of a man Dr. Forsythe was, and what kind of a wife he had!

Mrs. Kedwin talked on eagerly; but the mother who walked beside her lost all trace of what she was saying, and carried on her own train of thought, coming presently to this conclusion, "I mean to go and see him for a few minutes. There can be no impropriety in it now, since I have been first to my own pastor; and I must come to some decision, and not keep my poor girl in suspense." She announced the decision aloud, interrupting Mrs. Kedwin to do so. "Excuse me, Mrs. Kedwin, but I must turn here; I want to see Mr. Holden a moment."

"Never mind the interruption," said that gentleman, rising to meet her, pen in hand, and turning away from his manuscript paper on the desk as he spoke; "I am always ready to see people on business, and I know very well that some business will not wait. Did Caroline come?"

No need to explain her daughter's name and absence here. The minister's tone was almost as eager as a

boy's, and his face grew sympathetically grave as the mother shook her head. "Something has detained her for another day, I suppose. Nothing serious, I hope? Sit down and tell me all about it." It was a relief to do so. "Poor mother!" he said, with a sympathising smile, reaching out his hand to her as he spoke, "you have a blessing and a trouble come to you through one and the same source, have you not?"

There was a rush of tears to the mother's eyes which some way seemed to rest the strain upon her heart. It was such a comfort to speak to one who seemed to understand that she could honestly be pulled in two ways at the same time—could be grateful and regretful, and in doubt whether to accept or reject. "It is a great opening, I know," she faltered; "but then——"

"I know," the minister said; "I have no doubt at all that it is loving-kindness which causes our blessings and our crosses, so that sometimes we are put to it to tell which is which. Let us look at it carefully, Mrs. Bryant, on all sides. Just how do the *pros.* and *cons.* present themselves to your mind? In the first place, there is the trial of doing without your daughter; and that presses not only on you and on our brave boy Ben, but on the little Daisy."

"It is evident that you understand everything," said Mrs. Bryant gratefully. "I do not know how so young a man, who has no family and no trials of his own, can so readily enter into and so intelligently sympathise with the trials of others."

Then once again there came into the minister's face the look which had before suggested to Mrs. Bryant a pain which this man had to bear. He was silent a minute, and so was she, sorrowing over her last words, lest they had started troubled depths. Soon he said,—

"Dear friend, I am half-inclined to tell you a secret which will help you to understand that there may be shadows where the sunshine lingers. I am not so young as perhaps you think me—to-morrow I shall be thirty—and I am not a man without home and family from choice. You know Miss Webster well enough to realise something of what it is to have to tell you that she was to have been my wife, and that seven years ago her case was pronounced hopeless. Never mind," he said hastily, as he saw the look of pain spread over the listener's face, "do not pity me too much, dear friend; it can never be other than a joy to be able to call such a woman as Miss Webster is my best friend, and I am sure her Father and mine has planned all the way which He is leading us, and knows the best road. I only told you so that you might make sure of my sympathy with trouble. I am afraid I shall have almost too much sympathy for the little Dorothy."

"No," she said earnestly; "that is the strongest hold for us all. My little Daisy has helped us in that; she thinks she will be ashamed to meet Dorothy in heaven if she is selfish about her dear Line here." They both laughed over this—a tender laugh which answered instead of tears, and the minister walked to the window and stood in the shadow of the curtain folds for a minute, before he attempted to say more. When he spoke again his voice had recovered its natural cheery tone.

"Well, let us see. Of course for Caroline it will be a fine opening; there is first that opportunity which comes to God's child of doing a special good in a niche where it is hard to find just what will fit. I know enough of your young daughter, Mrs. Bryant, to be sure that the doctor has made no mistake. She would

be a great blessing to his little girl." This gave Mrs. Bryant another opportunity to see how different this man was from some whom she knew. Others had spoken of her daughter's opportunity for getting; he spoke of her opportunity for giving, and set it highest. Nothing had helped this unselfish mother more.

They went over the ground carefully after this: all about the schools of Philadelphia, concerning which it appeared that this minister knew a great deal; all about the probable opportunity for improvement, and about how those at home would manage without the elder daughter; especially the influence of her absence on the sensitive Daisy. "That perplexes me," said Mrs. Bryant. "It will be hard for Daisy to get through the winter without her sister—harder than for us. But it will also be very hard upon her to think that her sister gave up advantages and opportunities for her sake."

"I know," said the minister; "she is a very peculiar little flower, and I think I know her well enough to say that the latter hurt would be worse for her than the first."

"There is one thing," said the mother, her face flushing as she spoke; "I do not know what kind of a man this doctor is. He is a great doctor, I presume, and he is kind-hearted, and has a great influence already over my daughter, which makes me all the more anxious for her. What if he were not a Christian man? Some people, perhaps most people, would suppose that that need make no difference, so long as my daughter is a little girl, and would perhaps hardly ever see the man in whose house she was employed; but to me it does."

"Assuredly it does, my dear madam, and I am glad

to be able to tell you that a more earnest Christian man than Dr. Forsythe it would, I think, be hard to find. I do not know him personally, but I know a great deal of him, and his whole life seems to me to be Christlike."

"Then," said Mrs. Bryant, drawing a long breath, "I am afraid—I mean I believe that the matter is settled. I am sure Ben, when he hears all that you have said, will think that we ought to give Caroline the opportunity, hard as it may be for us, and in some respects for her. Mr. Holden, I do not know how to thank you for your kindness, and I do not know how to express my sympathy for you in your great affliction. I wish you knew how deeply I feel for you, and how entirely I will respect your confidence."

"I know it all, madam," the minister said, even cheerily. "It is all right; Miss Webster and I are in our Father's hands, and we trust Him. There is another world than this, you know."

To say that Caroline Bryant's heart beat faster than usual when on Monday morning she stood on the white steps of Dr. Forsythe's house waiting for admittance, would be to put it very mildly indeed. In her next letter to Ben she told him it thumped so hard that it seemed to her that the policeman just then passing would hear it, and ask what was the matter. More than that, her limbs trembled so that they could hardly hold her, and she felt sure her teeth would chatter the moment she attempted to speak. She had just passed through a trying ordeal in bidding good-bye to the little Brinkers and their mother. Daisy cried louder than the others, but it is doubtful if she felt worse than the mother, who declared that she could not feel it more if

one of her own children was going away; and Caroline herself had shed some very salt tears, and kissed them all over and over again, and promised to come just as often as she could to see them, and felt, as the door at last closed upon her, as though she were parting from all her friends.

She was glad to see only the young man who opened the door for patients, and to be shown into a little room at the right of the hall to wait a few minutes quite by herself. It gave her a chance to grow quiet, and to ask herself what she trembled over. Certainly she was not afraid of Dr. Forsythe, nor of Dorothy, and Mrs. Forsythe could not be so very terrible. Poor Caroline had lived a great deal in the week that was passed, since she wrote that all-important letter to her mother. Letters had sometimes travelled at the rate of two a day between her home and Philadelphia since that time. All the details of the remarkable plan had been explained and discussed as well as people a hundred miles apart could discuss them, and now it was all settled. Caroline was to stay, and put away from herself the thought of seeing her dear ones before June.

It all seemed very strange, and at times very terrible, when she thought of it. Here was she, Caroline Bryant, who had kissed her mother one October morning and gone out nutting, expecting to be at home again before the sun set, who instead must look forward to a sunset in June before she could kiss her mother again. There had been a faint hope in her heart that the mother would think she ought to come home for a week or two and see them all, and get ready to go away; and in truth the mother had thought of it, and counted her little hoard of money gathered for the supply

of coal, and talked with Ben, and shaken her head sadly, and concluded that the home visit must be given up on account of the expense. This was before Caroline's letter came, saying that she had hoped something of the kind would happen, but had given it up because Dr. Forsythe said that morning that he hoped she would be ready for school on the following Monday. The new term would open then, and it would be the best time to begin.

And this was Saturday, and, according to the doctor's plans, she was to come to her new home as soon after breakfast as she could, and get acquainted with them, so as to be ready for her duties on Monday. Her small plain trunk had been packed by Mrs. Brinker's own hands, the good woman dropping tears among the garments.

She had herself washed and ironed them with utmost care, and even mended some of them as carefully as Caroline's own mother could have done; though over this last work Caroline protested, saying that mother always had her do her own mending. "I know, child," said Mrs. Brinker, "and no doubt you can do it better than I can; but all the same I want to do it. There's so little we can do to show our love and gratitude; and you have been an angel of mercy to us, you know."

On the whole, do you wonder that the young girl's limbs trembled and almost refused to hold her, while she sat in the little reception room and waited, and wondered what the doctor would say first, and when she should see Mrs. Forsythe, and what she would say to her?

CHAPTER XV.

A LONG, WONDERFUL DAY.

"GOOD-MORNING," said a cheery voice just at her elbow. So absorbed had she been with her own thoughts that Dr. Forsythe had pushed aside the curtains and entered noiselessly without her knowing it. "Here you are, as fresh as the morning; which is fortunate, for my little Dorothy is in such a state of excitement and expectancy that I hardly know how she could have waited much longer. She is at this moment taking breakfast in her room. I believe I will take you directly there; she will like to serve you to a glass of milk with her own hands. You have breakfasted, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, sir, a long time ago," said Caroline, following the doctor's swift movements down the long hall.

"Ah! that is fortunate, also, because now you will not mind taking a second one with Dorothy. I was obliged to take mine very early also, so Dorothy and her grandmother had theirs sent to their rooms."

So there was a grandmother in this home? Caroline had not heard of her before, and but for the fact that there was so much to look at, would have set to wondering what she was like. By this time they were

at the top of the long flight of stairs, and were moving swiftly down another hall, where half-open doors on either side revealed glimpses of beautiful rooms, which reminded Caroline of Judge Dunmore's parlour.

"Here we are at last," the doctor said, and he threw wide open a door at his left, bringing to view a room so lovely that Caroline could not repress a little exclamation of delight. It had many long, low windows, from two of which the morning sun was streaming; it was carpeted in some soft, thick stuff of a delicate cream colour, bestrewn with delicately-tinted autumn leaves. At one end of the room was a great white rug of softest fur, near which was a large easy-chair of luxurious pattern, in the depths of which sat Dorothy at this moment, a pretty table drawn near her, on which stood a silver salver, with a dainty breakfast spread temptingly upon it. There was a large alcove near one of the sunny windows, the curtains of which, being only partially looped, showed a beautiful bedstead in white and gold. Indeed, those two colours prevailed wherever one's eyes rested; and the small, golden-haired child in a white merino wrapper fitted elegantly into the surroundings.

"Has she come?" said Dorothy, raising herself on one elbow to look eagerly past her father; then she caught a glimpse of Caroline. "Oh, I am so glad! Now you will take some breakfast with me. I have been saving it; it is so very desolate to eat alone."

Dr. Forsythe rolled a great easy-chair to the table's side, and motioned Caroline to a seat before he answered the bell which just then tinkled.

"That is papa's bell," said Dorothy, nodding towards the little white knob in the wall. "It always rings when he comes to see me; it is just as though the

people knew he had stopped for a minute, and did not want him to. Do you suppose I can ever tell you how glad I am that you have come? You know I told you how lonely I got with only nurse to talk to. Of course I have others every little while, but times when I want them most I can't have them. Will you eat a piece of the steak? It is very good, I suppose; I tried to eat some to please papa, but I am not hungry this morning. Perhaps I can eat now that I have somebody to help me. Isn't it nice to have you all to myself? Do you suppose you will like me?"

"I do not see how I could help it," said Caroline, trying not to laugh. "But I do not think I can eat much breakfast—not this morning; I had mine almost two hours ago." Yet while she spoke she put a bit of the steak to her lips, and was forced to tell herself that it was very different from that served at Conductor Brinker's table; it seemed surprising that Dorothy could not eat such breakfasts as this.

Presently she found opportunity to ask the question which she found was uppermost, "Haven't you a grandmother, Dorothy?"

"Yes," said the little girl gravely; "but she is not at all like the grandmothers in books. She isn't," shaking her head, as Caroline gave her an inquiring look, and waited for an explanation; "she is very good, and everybody—respects her"—(the dashes stand for a curious little pause which Dorothy made before she pronounced the word), "but she wears black silk dresses a good deal, and ruffles, and does not like to have them rumpled; she does not have any place for heads to rest and be petted, you know; and she thinks that papa pets me too much, and makes me have less

strength than I would have. She says little girls are brought up very differently from what they were when she was young, and she thinks her way was the best. She is father's mother, and we all love her, of course; but she is not like a grandmother in a book, not in the least." Caroline began to understand.

That day was a very remarkable one to Caroline Bryant. Several times during its progress she felt as though she must get by herself somewhere and write to Ben, there were so many wonderful things to describe; but by evening she began to feel as though it would be of no use to write any letters, she could never do justice to the subject. Dorothy's eager interest in her new possession did not flag in the least. She spent the entire day in showing her through the rooms, explaining the uses of many things which were entirely new to Caroline, and asking her questions about a life which was equally strange to her. One experience gave Caroline a mixed sensation; she could not be sure which was the stronger, pleasure or pain. Dr. Forsythe had looked in hurriedly to say, "Dorothy, you must not forget to take your friend to Mrs. Packard's room, and ask her to give her what attention is needed, and it should be done before twelve o'clock, you know." Then he turned to Caroline. "Mrs. Packard is the member of our family who does the planning and the buying for us all. We wear, as a rule, what she selects as proper. Of course we are allowed an opinion, which may weigh with her and may not. She understands that she is to add you to her list, and get for you what you may need between this and to-morrow morning. It is merely a matter of business, you know; your mother and I have exchanged letters, and we understand one another perfectly."

Caroline felt that he added this last in kindness to her, because her cheeks had flushed and her eyes drooped. It seemed so very strange to have any other person than her mother planning as to her needs; and it seemed so very trying to have to need things which her mother had not provided.

But Dorothy took it all as a matter of course. "Oh, yes!" she said, "we must go to Mrs. Packard directly. Has your trunk come, Caroline? She will have to go through it, you know, to find what you need, and you will have to answer dozens of questions; it is rather tiresome, but we will go at once and have done with it." Dr. Forsythe had already gone; Caroline drew back from the open door.

"Must I go?" she said pitifully to Dorothy. "I do not think I need anything just now, and it seems very strange."

"Oh, but papa said so, you know. It is all very well for papa to say we have to do as Mrs. Packard says; but the truth is, we have to do just as he says, every one of us, Mrs. Packard and all, and he has told her what to do for you. You needn't mind, Caroline; it is always pleasant to do as papa says. Come," said Dorothy.

And Caroline went. Mrs. Packard was tall and grave, with grey eyes and thin lips. The grey eyes were very keen, they embarrassed Caroline; she had a feeling that her thoughts were being looked at and commented upon.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Packard, "this is the young person, is it? I remember. Well, there is no time to be lost, I should judge. I had your trunk sent up to your room a short time ago. We will look through it at once and make a memorandum. Miss Dorothy, will

you come with us, or sit here and rest? Your papa is afraid you will overtax your strength to-day."

"I will come, if you please," said Dorothy. "Papa is always afraid of that; I will sit in Caroline's easy-chair and rest."

As they crossed the room Caroline had a vision of herself in the tall glass. A somewhat overgrown girl, in a dress which was too short for her, and whose sleeves were not made in the prevailing style, and whose waist did not fit so well as it used. These things she realised as she had not before. She began to realise them when Mrs. Packard said, looking her over from head to foot, "There is no time to be lost, I should judge."

The first glimpse of her own room nearly took her breath away. They had not been admitted when Dorothy had undertaken to show it to her; a chamber-maid had assured her that there was sweeping going on, and she must wait; so Caroline followed Mrs. Packard into it for the first time. Such a lovely room, opening out of Dorothy's; not so large as hers, but sunny, and furnished with exquisite taste, even to a cunning little writing-desk in the corner.

"Do you like it?" asked Dorothy. "I wanted you here, right beside me. Nurse sleeps on the other side of my room, where the folding doors are; at first I wanted you there, but papa would not consent to it. He said this was quite as near as the other, if there were not folding doors; and I planned how the furniture should be arranged. Do you like it?"

"It is lovely!" said Caroline softly. And it was then that she decided there would be no use in trying to put this day into a letter for Ben.

Mrs. Packard was a woman of business; she went

rapidly over the contents of the little trunk, shaking out with unceremonious hand Caroline's poor plain dresses, which had never before looked so few and plain; she made no comments, even her questions were very few. "There is not much to ask about, after all," she said. Caroline could not be sure what she meant.

"Please stand, my dear, and let me measure you. I think that will be sufficient without your going down town; ready-made things are never a very perfect fit, but I think I can manage it. I will take this dress with me, and this sack, and one shoe; that ought to be sufficient."

Caroline could only look on, bewildered. Why her best dress and sack and one shoe should have the honour of going somewhere with Mrs. Packard, and what was to be the result of their journey, was more than she could fathom; there seemed nothing for her but submission.

At luncheon she saw the stately grandmother in her black silk dress and ruffles. She looked handsome, and dignified, and cold. "So this is the child," she said, looking at her with cold blue eyes; "she is rather young to have charge of Dorothy, I think."

"I can trust her," the doctor said kindly. "Sit here, Caroline; this is to be your seat at table hereafter."

"You trust too easily sometimes, Kent," his mother said; but the doctor only laughed, and asked Caroline if she liked grapes.

Luncheon was hard to manage. Caroline did not know which spoon to use for her soup and which for her jelly; and she dropped a tiny drop of soup on the elegant cloth, and felt that the grandmother's eyes were on her. It had startled and frightened her to think of having always a seat at this grand table; without having given the matter much thought, she found that

she had not supposed she would take her meals at the same table with Dr. Forsythe. Altogether, when the brown head rested at last among the plump pillows of her new bed, its owner felt that she had lived a month since morning, and was never so tired before. "Though what should have tired me," said the puzzled girl, "I really cannot imagine. I have done nothing at all all day. I wonder what I'm to do? I wish they had let me begin to-day."

Once she had asked Dorothy what her work was to be, and the child had looked at her with a puzzled laugh, and said, "Why, I don't know; you are to be happy, I suppose. Papa says that is my work."

One experience had closed the day over which Caroline lay with wide-open eyes, thinking. Dorothy, in white wrapper, with her hair tucked away for the night, had called to her new friend, "Will you come and read with me? Here is a seat in my great wide chair; it is plenty wide enough for two; papa often sits here. Isn't it nice? Now will you read to me, or shall we each read a verse?"

Caroline chose the latter arrangement, and found that the "reading" was from Dorothy's large, beautifully-bound Bible. Her clear, slow voice sounded very sweet rolling out the words: "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

"Now," Dorothy had said, at the close of the reading, "will you pray first, or shall I?"

Caroline's cheeks were aflame. "I never pray aloud," she murmured, with the slightest perceptible pause between the last two words.

"Do you not? I always do, even when quite alone; it is nicer, I think; it gets you used to hearing your own voice, papa says so. Don't you want to begin

to-night? I couldn't hear you if you said the words to yourself."

Then she had noticed Caroline's glowing face, and, governed by a sweet impulse of unselfishness and care for the feelings of others, had added, "But never mind if you would rather not; perhaps it makes you feel lonesome and homesick. Poor Caroline! you want your mother, don't you?" For by that time the tears had forced their way down Caroline's red cheeks, and Dorothy had pushed her Bible from her to lean forward and kiss them away.

It was her slow, sweet voice which said the words of prayer that night—simple, childlike words, but wonderful to Caroline because of their assured way of speaking, as though of course she was heard and would be answered. She prayed for Caroline's home and friends by name, and brought a fresh rush of tears, it is true, but they were not bitter ones. The prayer was very short, but its influence kept Caroline awake long after her head was resting on its pillow. Uppermost among her thoughts was the question, What would Dorothy have said if she had told her that she did not pray at all? "Of course I say the Lord's Prayer," said the poor girl, turning her pillow, which had already been warmed by her flushed cheek; "but that isn't praying. It never sounds like her prayer; it just seems to be saying over words. She is a Christian, and so are Ben, and mamma, and even little Daisy. Oh, dear me!" And the day ended in a great burst of tears. There was another thing which troubled Caroline. All this long, wonderful day she had seen nothing of Dorothy's mother, heard nothing concerning her. It seemed very strange, and, to tell the simple truth, Caroline was afraid of her.

CHAPTER XVI.

BORROWED TROUBLE.

A BROAD beam of sunshine awoke Caroline the next morning. She opened her eyes suddenly, and lay for some minutes before she could decide where she was. No sunshine had ever succeeded in getting into the little hall bedroom which had been hers while at Mrs. Brinker's.

"Oh!" she said at last, aloud. The word was partly a confession of the fact that she remembered who and where she was, and partly an exclamation over the contents of the large arm-chair near her bed. She stared at them for a few minutes; then sprang out of bed and began an investigation. The clothing which she had taken off the night before and arranged in a neat group, as her mother had taught her, had entirely disappeared; in its place was a new suit, complete even to the long black stockings, very soft and fine, which hung over the back of the chair. It was also plainly to be understood why one of Caroline's shoes had gone down town with Mrs. Packard the night before; here were two shoes that had never belonged to her before, but which looked so exactly the shape of her foot that it was hardly possible they were not intended for her.

"They are too grand for me," said the young girl,

in a murmur half of bewilderment and half of delight; "but then I shall have to wear them or go barefoot, they have taken my others. I wonder if it can be that I am expected to put on this wonderful dress? and before breakfast, too!"

She held it up before her as she spoke—a soft wool dress of lovely olive green tints, trimmed with velvet of the same bewitching shade, and finished at the throat with a delicate edge of something which looked like silver lacework. Caroline, who had royal tastes, felt herself tingle even to her fingers' ends as they softly touched the velvet. What could Dr. Forsythe mean by ordering such a dress as this for her? Or was it possible that Mrs. Packard had made a mistake, and bought material altogether too fine and rich? Could it be intended for her, any way? How did they ever find a dress already made which looked as though it might fit her exactly?

Caroline's knowledge of city stores was limited. Neither did she understand how readily they would undertake to fit by measure a person whom they had never seen, especially when so careful and capable a woman as Mrs. Packard had seen her. It really was surprising what a change a becoming dress, made in the prevailing style, wrought in the young girl. Her face flushed a brilliant red as she looked at herself from head to foot in the glass, when at last she was dressed.

"I do not believe Fanny Kedwin would know me at all," was actually her first thought. Her second was a wish that mother and Daisy and Ben could see her; and the third was whether mother would approve of such elegance. Surely she could not have understood what Dr. Forsythe was going to do. "I ought to take

it off," said the poor girl, sitting down in bewilderment on the side of the bed. "I ought not to wear such clothes; we are poor, and my mother cannot afford it, and I am her daughter. I do not know what to do, I am sure; there must be some mistake. Why did they take my own clothes away? They had no right to do that."

Her perplexity was taking the form of indignation, when a knock at the door interrupted her thoughts.

"May I come in?" said Mrs. Packard. "Really, my dear, I must say that Miss Watson did exceedingly well; she was sure she could fit you from my description, but of course I was anxious, and the things came home too late to be tried last night. I hope you like the dress?"

"It is very beautiful, ma'am," said Caroline, blushing painfully; "but——" and then she stopped.

"Well," said Mrs. Packard, not unkindly, "is there anything wrong about them? I suppose there is, of course; it would be surprising if ready-made garments fitted exactly. It is nothing but what can be remedied, I hope?"

"Oh, it is not that," Caroline made haste to say, "they fit beautifully; but I thought there must be some mistake, ma'am. I was not to have such nice clothes—at least, I did not suppose I was—and I cannot think my mother would like it."

"I have nothing to do with that, my dear," said Mrs. Packard, with a quiet smile. "I followed Dr. Forsythe's orders very carefully, as I always do."

The smile, for some reason, made Caroline feel very uncomfortable. "I think there must be some mistake," she said, with dignity; "we are poor, and do not dress in such nice clothes, and I do not want anybody

to give me what we cannot afford. I am not an object of charity."

Ben would certainly have called his sister some of his old teasing names if he had seen her then. Eyes, as well as cheeks, seemed to be blazing; she was in the mood to take off every garment that she had put on, and was only held from beginning the work then and there by the thought that her own dress had disappeared.

"If you please, I should like my own dress," she said, trying to control her voice and speak quietly. "I want to put it on."

"Of course you can have it," said Mrs. Packard, very coldly. "I have not stolen it, child. I took the liberty to take it away last night because I saw there was a place in the sleeve that needed darning, and I repaired it for you. I will send it to you at once, and your other clothing you will find in that large closet at the end of the bureau. I might suggest, however, that it was Dr. Forsythe's direction that you be dressed for church when you came to the breakfast-table; that was why I took the pains to arrange everything for you last night, that you might have as little trouble with it as possible. This certainly is more becoming than the dress you wore yesterday; but suit yourself."

With the mention of Dr. Forsythe's name Caroline's absurd anger, which she did not half understand, subsided; but in its place was a great distress. She could not get away from the feeling that this lofty woman, with a disagreeable smile, had made a mistake and fitted her out in a manner which Dr. Forsythe would not approve.

"Would it be possible for me to see Dr. Forsythe

a moment before breakfast?" she asked, and her voice was meeker than before.

"I am sure I do not know," Mrs. Packard said, turning coldly away. "We are not in the habit of disturbing Dr. Forsythe in this house if we can help it. He has very little time to himself as it is; but if the matter is important enough, you might ring the reception-room bell, and Thomas will see."

How hopelessly formidable this sounded! Caroline felt as though she could never do it in the world, and yet was at that moment exceedingly sure she could not go down to breakfast in what seemed to her borrowed plumage. She turned away in despair, and walked toward the sunny window just as another knock, lighter than Mrs. Packard's, sounded on her door. It was Mrs. Packard who opened the door and let in Dorothy.

"Good-morning," said the low sweet voice. "Oh, Caroline! how very pretty you look. Papa will like that dress, I think. How nicely you fitted her, Mrs. Packard; I do not see how you could!"

"I am glad somebody appreciates it," said Mrs. Packard somewhat stiffly, and she stooped and kissed Dorothy as she spoke.

If Caroline had not been so full of distress over her own imaginary troubles she would have seen that the good woman had tried hard to please, and was hurt and disappointed over this way of receiving her work. But the poor girl could think only of herself at that moment.

"Oh, Dorothy," she said, her face and voice full of distress, "do you think it would be possible for me to see your father just a moment before breakfast? I would not hinder him but a minute, and indeed I must see him before I can go downstairs."

"Of course," said Dorothy promptly; "papa always sees people who need him. Are you sick, Caroline? Oh, I hope you are not sick. I will ring my little bell, which papa always answers himself when he can, and you can come to my room and see him. Will that do? If you want to speak to him quite alone I will stay here and wait for you."

She turned as she spoke and went toward the little white knob on the wall, while Mrs. Packard, without more words, left the room.

In a very few minutes Dr. Forsythe's quick knock was heard at the door. It was Dorothy who answered it. "Papa," she said, returning his kiss, "it is Caroline; she needs to see you." Then she vanished, leaving Caroline alone with the doctor.

"I wanted to see you," she began, in confusion, "to ask, or—I mean, to say that I do not think I can be dressed as you meant; I think Mrs. Packard must have made a mistake."

"Does not the dress suit you?" His voice was very kind, yet Caroline felt that she was not making herself in the least understood.

"It is beautiful!" she said desperately; "too beautiful, and that is the trouble. I am afraid my mother would not like it, and I do not if she doesn't. We are poor and cannot afford such clothes; but we have always worn our own clothes, I mean the ones we earned, and I——" She came to another abrupt pause. Was she not appearing as an ungrateful, ill-mannered little girl? How could she put her trouble into words and make Dr. Forsythe understand?

But a light had broken over his face; he began to understand.

"Let us sit down and see about this," he said, draw-

ing a chair for Caroline and one for himself. "You are afraid your mother would consider you too much dressed for the work which you have to do. Is that the idea? I thought so. Suppose we consider it carefully. Your mother has placed you in my care for the winter, to do certain work for me, and to be guided by my judgment. In return I am to furnish you with board and clothing. Now your clothing, though I have no doubt it was entirely suited to the place you filled at home, is not, in Mrs. Packard's estimation, suitable for your place here. Besides, it was of course wearing out, as clothes have a way of doing. In all such matters we of this household have a habit of deferring to Mrs. Packard's judgment, because she understands the points, and because it is her duty to attend to them. I gave her general directions, and the amount of money which she judged, after carefully estimating the probable price of things, would be enough. It seemed a very reasonable sum to me, and she has not applied for more money, but, on the contrary, has assured me that she has some left. Therefore I judge that she has done her work well, and if the dress suits you everything is as it should be.

"Your feeling in regard to your mother's opinion does you credit, if you did not understand that I was to furnish the clothes for this season, and be the one to determine their general fitness for the place which you are to fill. That being the case, it is my taste, you understand, which ought to govern yours, and even hers. As to the question of 'other people's clothes,' which I think troubled you a little, you are mistaken; the clothes are yours, and fairly earned, or are to be. I consider the services which you are to give me in return fairly warrant the expenditures which

I have made, otherwise I should not have made them; so it is purely a business transaction. But suppose it were otherwise, and I had chosen to make you a gift. I hope and believe that you are going to cultivate a nature which is fine enough to receive gifts from your friends, even when they take the form of useful articles which you need. Any other spirit than that is a false one, and has its root not in self-respect, but in pride."

Dr. Forsythe's tones had been kindness itself, and there was a pleasant smile on his face as he looked at the red-cheeked girl before him; but she felt exceedingly ashamed.

"I have been very foolish, I am afraid," she said at last, in a low voice. Under the power of his calm kind words her outburst seemed to herself extremely silly.

"No," he said gently, "not intentionally foolish; you have only a mistaken sense of independence, I think. You will probably hear a great deal about that word, and you cannot begin too early to learn that there is a false pride sometimes named independence which has no right whatever to the name. But I think we understand each other now; you did quite right to come to me with your troubles; if you will always show such prompt good sense in getting rid of them we shall do nicely. Now, if everything is straight, we will get Dorothy and go to breakfast."

At the end of one of the long halls was a pier glass, in which our young woman could view herself from head to foot. It was when she was ready for church that she stopped before it and took a survey. She was certainly a very different looking girl from that short-waisted, short-skirted one who had looked

at herself but the day before. Her heavy sack of rough cloth, trimmed with large buttons, and her trim little hat, with a nodding plume, were not only unlike anything she had ever worn, but were finer than Fanny Kedwin had ever appeared in, though her mother spent more money than some people thought was wise upon her daughter's dress. Moreover, Caroline was softly smoothing her first pair of kid gloves while she looked and thought. Dr. Forsythe had said that everything was straight between them, but it was not true. Caroline's difficulties, though not of the same shade as they had been an hour before, were still perplexing enough. Why should she have such pretty things, and Daisy, her own little sister, go so plainly dressed? Why should Ben have to wear his shabby overcoat, outgrown even last winter, while she was in a plush-trimmed coat of beautiful shape and fit? How could anything be right? However, one question had been settled for her. Plainly, she had hurt the feelings of Mrs. Packard, and as that lady, in a neat black dress and wrap, passed down the hall just then with head erect and a cold look in her eyes, Caroline shyly addressed her. "If you please, Mrs. Packard, I like my dress and hat and everything very much; they are beautiful, and I think you must have had a great deal of trouble to get them. I thank you very much."

"I'm sure I'm glad if you like them," Mrs. Packard said, still somewhat stiffly. "I thought this morning that I had made a big mistake somehow, and nothing was right."

Caroline had much ado to keep the tears from showing in her eyes; it was very trying to find that nobody quite understood her. "Oh, it wasn't that there

was any mistake of that kind," she hurried to say. "I don't know how to explain what I mean; but my brother Ben has to wear his old overcoat that he has outgrown, and Daisy hasn't had a new dress in a long while, and mother wears——" here Caroline's voice forsook her. At the remembrance of that dear mother's much-worn black dress and old-fashioned shawl, there came such a lump in Caroline's throat as refused the passage of another word.

There was no need for more words; at last Mrs. Packard understood.

"Bless your dear heart!" she said, in a hearty, friendly voice, "don't you go to spoiling your eyes and making yourself miserable over such kinds of questions. It is just this way: you and I have to go to church and sit in Dr. Forsythe's pew, and be counted as part of his family, and we have to look so that folks won't stare at us and think we aren't respectable. What you and I call fine, folks of that kind think is only being decent, and things have to fit in where they are put. The doctor understands this, and plans accordingly, and what we have to do is to fit where we are put. Bless you! your clothes didn't cost half as much as you think, I daresay. The right colour and shape have a great deal to do with such things, and Dr. Forsythe's pocket-book doesn't know anything is out of it. He carries a different pocket-book from what you and I do, I can tell you that."

Caroline at once had a vision of a little paper pocket-book faded and worn, and with exactly fifteen cents in it—all the money she had in the world—and she could not help laughing at the thought of Dr. Forsythe being obliged to use it.

CHAPTER XVII.

LEARNING.

THAT wonderful Sunday, which stood out for ever in Caroline Bryant's life history as a marked day, was moving toward sunset when she received a summons which set her heart to fluttering. Dorothy had left her but a little while before, with the information that she always spent that hour with papa when he did not have to go out to see some sick person; and she had spent the time in looking carefully over the Sunday School lesson, because Dorothy had said that papa would read it at family worship, and talk a little bit about it, and ask some questions. Caroline had a terror of being asked a question which she could not answer, and resolved when she heard this to take the first leisure minute for studying. She was just puzzling over a verse which she did not in the least understand, when Dorothy knocked at her door. "Papa says we may go and see mamma a few minutes," she said, her face aglow with pleasure. "She has not been so well to-day, and has not seen even me; but to-night she feels better, and has sent word that she wants to see you too. Will you come right away, please?" Caroline arose at once; but if it had been possible for her to think of an excuse for not going she would certainly have given

it. Her limbs trembled so she could hardly walk, and she half thought that Dorothy must hear her heart beat. She could not explain why she had such a fear of Mrs. Forsythe, but it had been growing on her all day. However, she followed Dorothy and her father down the long hall to another part of the house. Dorothy was clinging to her father's hand and talking to him, so Caroline's silence was not noticed. The door opened very softly, and the new-comer found herself in a larger room than she had seen before. Dorothy turned at once toward the bed in the alcove with a glad little murmur, and bent her head over the pillows. Despite her nervous tremor Caroline's beauty-loving eyes could not help taking in, while she waited, some of the delights of that room. The carpet was so thick and soft that no sound of footfall, however heavy, could possibly be heard on it, and the pattern suggested a lovely sunset. The most exquisite order prevailed everywhere; it did not look in the least like a sick-room, to Caroline's eyes, at least. Everything was elegant; the easy-chairs seemed almost like beds themselves, and drawn near the bay window was a couch large and billowy, piled high with cushions. There were plants in the southern window, and flowers in the vases, and a wood fire in the grate.

"It is the hardest room to describe I ever saw," wrote Caroline to Ben in the next letter. "Everything is in it that ought to be, and everything is in its place, and looks as though it always stayed there; and yet there is not a bit of stiffness such as there was when Mrs. Kedwin put her parlour in what she called 'complete order.'"

She had turned quite away from the bed, partly to still her own nervous excitement, and partly because of

an innate sense of delicacy about watching Dorothy's greeting to her mother, and was apparently studying the roses in the vase when Dr. Forsythe spoke to her.

"Come here, Caroline, and make the acquaintance of Dorothy's mother." She made her way across the room as best she could, and stood with glowing cheeks beside the bed. A delicate hand, almost as white as the frills of the white woollen wrapper, was held out to her, and a gentle voice said, "It is quite time I knew Caroline; she has stolen my Dorothy's heart." What a low, sweet voice she had, and the touch of her hand on Caroline's was warm and tender. Caroline, frightened as she was, could not help answering the pleasant smile on the lady's face with one of her own. Mrs. Forsythe held her hand, and went on talking to her husband about the services of the day, about the Sunday School and who had taken the Bible-class, quite as though she had been in the habit of attending, though it was years since she had been in church.

Presently she said to Caroline, still in the same low-toned voice, "Do you know, we are very thankful to your mother for sparing you to help our little girl? Tell her so for me; she will know just how a mother feels."

"My dear," said the doctor, "you have talked quite long enough for this time, I think. I must send all your company away, or they will disturb your dreams to-night."

Mrs. Forsythe smiled on him, drew the hand she held closer, and said in low tones to Caroline, "Kiss me, dear." The startled girl leaned forward, feeling much as she might if an angel had asked her for a kiss, and touched her lips softly to the delicate cheek, but the lady's kiss was warm and full, right on the rosy

mouth. "I feel that I can trust you, dear," she whispered, "and it rests me more than you can understand. You will take care of my little girl for her mother, will you not?" Then Caroline knew that she was ready to do anything for this fair sweet lady that it was possible for human being to do.

"It almost seems as though I could lie there and be sick for her," she told herself as she turned away; and when she said that she had given the utmost stretch to her loving help of which she was capable, for she could think of nothing she dreaded so much as the idea of lying in bed day after day and being sick.

It is surprising, when one stops to think of it, what a very short time it takes for us to become accustomed to an entirely different order of things from what we had known before. For instance, before Caroline had been three weeks in her new home it seemed the most natural thing in the world for her to dress herself each morning in her pretty new suit, and hurry through her breakfast and morning duties in time for a certain car.

The great schoolrooms, with their rows and rows of desks, the long halls, the many flights of stairs, the cases full of books, the blackboards reaching down the length of the rooms, the maps and charts and globes, and all the modern furnishings of the schoolroom, were growing to be matters of course to her. And as for the gaslights and electric bells and speaking tubes, and all the modern improvements of Dr. Forsythe's house, it seemed to her as though she had always used them.

She lived a very busy life, and had no time for homesickness.

As for Dorothy, no little princess of long ago ever

had a more faithful attendant than Caroline was to her. Most carefully was she watched that she was not too tired, or too warm, or in any way unfitted for a walk to the car, and her rubbers and wraps were looked after with equally vigilant eyes. "Caroline sees everything, papa," said Dorothy, "and thinks of everything. I don't believe she forgets me for a single second."

"God bless Caroline," said Dr. Forsythe, turning to her and resting on her brown head a hand that trembled a little even as his voice did. He saw very plainly what Caroline's eyes did not: that his Little White Flower, which was one of his pet names for Dorothy, would not need caring for very long. Had not Caroline become almost extravagantly fond of her little charge on her own account, she would still have delighted to care for her, not only because she was Dr. Forsythe's daughter, but because she seemed almost to feel the pressure of that fair sick mother's lips, and to hear her low voice say, "You will take care of my darling for her mother's sake, will you not?"

In addition to history, grammar, and the like, Caroline was taking another lesson not arranged for when she came. She went one morning to the doctor's private room with a message for Dorothy.

"Come in," he had said, nodding to her from the door, which stood ajar. "If your errand is not pressing, wait a minute until I have finished this letter." Caroline waited in silent astonishment. Dr. Forsythe was certainly not writing; he was walking back and forth across the room and talking with his secretary, who sat before a small table, running his fingers over a curious little instrument of some sort, not much larger than his two hands. It made a little clicking noise; Caroline thought it must be some kind of a music-box,

with the music shut off. She thought the secretary would have been more respectful to shut off its soft click also, while the doctor talked. But he did not. "The remedy of which you speak," said the doctor, "is nearly obsolete—at least none of the leading physicians use it any more. In my judgment it has worn itself out, or been superseded, because of recent discoveries in regard to this form of disease. Do I talk too fast for you?" he asked suddenly, stopping before the secretary, who was making the soft "click, clicking" with all his might, though his eyes were at that moment fixed on a row of books just in front of him. Caroline was so astonished that she forgot to notice what the doctor said next, but gave her entire attention to the secretary and his musical instrument. She saw a strip of paper not over a half-inch in width gliding under a tiny roller, and heaping itself up on the floor in soft masses. She drew a step nearer, and saw that this paper was covered with what looked like little straight marks; "as much alike as two peas in a pod," she wrote to Ben in her next letter. "And don't you think, Ben, it was a writing machine! He writes—the secretary does—just what Dr. Forsythe says, as fast as he can say it. Then when the doctor has gone on his round of calls, the secretary reads over what he has written, and copies it on his type-writer. Did you ever hear anything like that? Why, I know you did! I remember now your telling me something about such a machine that you read of, and Rufus Kedwin said he did not believe there was any such thing. Rufus never believes anything that he has not seen, does he? If he were here a little while I could show him several things he does not believe could be found." All this to Ben.

The doctor turned at last, and smiled on her puzzled face, as he said, "Is that something new? It is a stenograph. Have you time to tell her a little about it, Edwards? She carries eyes which are interested in everything new. If you have time to stop, Caroline, he will show you how it works. But first, what is wanted of me? I must be off."

Her errand done, Caroline gave ten happy minutes to learning about the queer little machine, thinking in her heart all the while what a description she would write of it to Ben, who liked all kinds of machinery, especially if it had to do with writing.

"It is very queer indeed," she said; "it does not seem as though one could ever learn to read that. Why, it is nothing but dashes, and they are just exactly alike."

"To a dot!" said Edwards, laughing; "but if you look closely you will see that they do not by any means occupy the same space on paper, nor are there by any means the same number of them on a straight line; and their positions on the paper show what letter they stand for."

"It does not show me," said Caroline, looking steadily at the slip of paper with an unutterably puzzled look.

"I presume not, any more than the dictionary would have shown you how to spell a word before you knew your letters. You have to master the alphabet first, just as you do with any language."

"Is it hard?" asked Caroline wistfully.

"Not at all hard; a wide-awake girl ought to learn to read it in a couple of weeks. If you like I will teach you how to read—and write, too, for that matter. The doctor will have no objection, I presume. He

heartily believes in people learning all they can in this world. He says one can never tell where it is going to chink in."

"I must tell that to Ben, any way," said Caroline delightedly; "he is always saying such things, and we never know where he gets them, unless he thinks them out." She hushed back a little sigh over this last sentence; it seemed to her sometimes very strange that she should be having all the advantages, and Ben all the work; and yet how eager he was to learn, and how much he would have profited by her opportunities! "I will learn everything I can," she told herself resolutely, "whether I like to learn it or not. I will do it if I get a chance, just so I can teach it to Ben when I go home."

This was the beginning of new lessons. Dr. Forsythe, on being told of the plan, seconded it warmly. "Learn to read and write the stenograph, by all means," he said. "The little machine is going to work a reform in the art of writing some day; the sooner people realise it and study it the better. A good type-writer and stenographer can earn his living, and the machine is destined to be used more and more when people get acquainted with it." All this was told to Ben, of course, in addition to what had already been written. The very next letter had in it a slip of narrow paper filled with neatly-made dashes. "That is a Bible verse," Caroline explained; "it is 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' I chose it because it has nearly all the letters of the alphabet in it, and I wanted you to see them. I know them all now. I dreamed about them and said them over in my sleep, until I could not forget them. You see, Ben, there are word-signs as well as letters. That

very first letter which stands all alone is *c*, and it stands for 'come.' The next letter is *u*, and the next *n*, and the next *t*, and the next *o*; then comes the letter *m*, which stands for 'me.'

"Is it not queer? You can't think how I like it! I have taken a lesson on the machine every day since I wrote to you about it. I wrote that Bible verse myself, and Mr. Edwards says there is not a mistake in it, and that I did well. The machine is such a little darling! I just love to make it click. It has nine keys—no, ten, counting the space key—but there are only five dashes to make. I could not understand at first what was the need of so many keys, when they kept telling me that it could not make but five marks, but I have found out; there is one in the middle for the thumb to use, then the four each side of it are just alike. I mean they make just the same marks on the paper. Well, all the marks are just alike, but what I mean is, they put the marks in the same place on the paper. I wonder if you understand it? It does not sound clear at all; I'll tell it different.

"The dash which is at the top of the paper is always *s*; now suppose you wanted to make the letter *s* on the machine, you touch the last key on the right hand and it is made—a single dash at the very top of the paper—but if you touch the last key on the left hand it is made again. It is so with each key; whether you use your right or your left hand you will make the same characters. Do you see? That is so you can write real fast, and not take time to jump your fingers over to the right or the left. At first it does not seem as though that could make any difference, but when you watch Mr. Edwards write for a while you know it does.

"Did not I really tell you the name of the machine? How queer! It is a 'stenograph.' Oh, Ben, how I wish you had one! Then we could write to each other on it; wouldn't that be fun? But they cost twenty-five dollars. Mr. Edwards writes the doctor's letters on his, and his lectures, and everything he wants written. The doctor just walks the floor and talks, and Mr. Edwards clicks away and looks around the room."

"Is not that the greatest writing you ever saw?" Ben said, as, having told its story and examined the curious slip of paper for the dozenth time, he passed it to Rufus Kedwin. Rufus glanced at it; his curiosity had been satisfied at the first look, some time ago.

"There's no writing about it," he said loftily; "that fellow is fooling her. Line is awfully easily fooled, sometimes; I don't believe anybody can make reading out of just a lot of dashes that are all alike!"

"But didn't I tell you that Line had learned the alphabet, and could read it herself? She wrote this, and read it, too. What do you mean, anyhow? You don't think Line would undertake to fool me, do you?"

"She might," said Rufus coolly. "What does she want to putter with such things for, any way? She hasn't a machine, and if she had what good would it do her? That's just exactly like Line; to go on learning things she hasn't any use for, and never will have."

"You've turned prophet, haven't you?" said Ben, good-naturedly. He had been provoked for about one minute; then he reflected how utterly foolish it was to be provoked with a boy who amounted to no more than Rufus Kedwin. "I don't know how you or anybody else is going to tell, yet awhile, whether Line will ever

have any use for that. She has done pretty well with things that she has learned so far."

"Humph!" said Rufus. It was not exactly a sneer, but there was a contemptuous sound in it which made Ben's face flush. He understood what it meant, and concluded, like the wise boy that he sometimes was, not to say one word in reply.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MACHINES AND NEWS.

BEN'S very next letter to Caroline had in it this sentence: "I am tremendously interested in your dashes. I always am interested in new things, you know, especially if they have any machinery about them. Suppose you write me a letter on the thing? You might send a translation of it at the same time; but I am learning the alphabet from the slip you sent, and I have a fancy to see if I could make any words out of your letter."

This sentence Caroline read to Dorothy, and that evening she told her father about it.

"Good!" said the busy man, in his cheeriest tones; "you and I ought to be acquainted with Ben, Pussy. How shall we manage it? Perhaps we will write him a letter ourselves one of these days."

"I think your father is wonderful," said Caroline, following his retreating form with admiring eyes. Dorothy gave a happy little laugh.

"I have always thought so," she said; "but what makes you say so just now?"

"Why, it is so wonderful, when he has so many and such important things to think of, and people waiting for him, and all that, that he should take the

trouble to think about Ben and be interested in him; it seems strange—seems like a very great man. Not but what Ben is worth thinking about," she said, with flushing cheek; "but then he doesn't know him, you see."

Dorothy laughed again. "Papa isn't like any other papa," she said. "He is like—I will tell you, Caroline, who I think he is like. I don't say it often because it wouldn't sound right—people wouldn't understand what I meant—but I think he is like Jesus Christ."

Caroline gave a little start of surprise. She had never heard just that said about anybody, and it did sound strange; but the more she wondered about it the more she thought it might be so. He went about among sick people and poor people a great deal, just as she knew Jesus did when He was on earth, and just as far as he was able he cured the sick; and he had always a kind word for everybody he met. He certainly must be a little like Jesus. And then this young girl, who had known about Jesus all her life, felt her cheeks tingle with a thought which almost made her ashamed; she already felt that she not only respected but loved Dr. Forsythe, and wanted to please him in every possible way. Why did she not love Jesus Christ, and feel anxious to please Him? "It is because I do not know Him," she told herself, as alone in her room that night she thought of it again while she was brushing her hair and braiding it for the night; "it is different, and I cannot help feeling that it is. If I could see Him and hear Him talk, and watch His beautiful life, I am sure I should love Him." Then she opened her Bible to read the few verses that she had always been in the habit of reading quite by herself just before she knelt down to pray.

It seemed very strange, in fact, almost made her feel afraid, to see that the verse she opened to began, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

Was Jesus thinking that thought about her at that moment? I am not sure but just then the first real desire to be a Christian that she ever felt in her life came to Caroline Bryant. She had often feebly wished for a few moments that she were one, as one might wish for the moon perhaps; but to-night she said in her heart, "It must be good to have Him for a real Friend, and know that you love Him and are pleasing Him. Oh! why am I not one of His friends?"

New things, or at least things which were new to Caroline, were very common in Dr. Forsythe's house. The next one which interested her deeply she found in the kitchen. None of her duties lay in that direction, and it happened that she had been in the house for several weeks before she had done more than pass through it. One morning she was sent to the cook with a message from Mrs. Packard, and stopped in astonishment near the door to listen to a peculiar rumbling noise. "What in the world can that be?" she said to herself. "Something must be wrong with the steam pipes. I wonder if I ought to go somewhere and try to find out? Why, the noise comes from the kitchen. The cook must be there."

The noise ceased as suddenly as it had come, and no harm appeared to have resulted. Caroline pushed open the kitchen door, and found not only the cook, but Nancy, the dining-room girl, standing beside a large shining box, and watching with apparent satisfaction a stream of soapsuds falling out from a faucet underneath. Inside the box were rows and rows of

dishes: platters, vegetable dishes, cups, saucers, glasses, spoons; in short, everything which had a little while ago been on the well-filled breakfast table was arranged in orderly rows within that box. Each group of dishes seemed to have rooms of their own. The saucers fitted into neat little wire shelves which apparently had been made to receive them; the cups looked down on them from wire shelves above, while quite down below was another division altogether, where the plates and other heavy dishes had it all their own way.

Nancy laughed merrily over the puzzled look on Caroline's face. The two had been good friends since the evening Caroline had offered to finish setting the table, and let Nancy go out on an errand which she was eager to do.

"Did you never see anything like this before?" she asked. As she spoke she dashed a pailful of water over the dishes, which Caroline knew from the steam that arose must have been very hot. She gave an involuntary start toward the cut-glass pitcher, and said, "Why, Nancy, you will break the glasses!"

"Oh, no, I won't!" said Nancy, in perfect unconcern; "they have been tempered in the first water, and will bear it pretty near to boiling. Now they have been washed, and I am going to rinse them off." Down went the cover, and grasping the handle Nancy turned it vigorously. The surprising noise was accounted for. Only a few turns, and again she opened the faucet, let the water flow out, and dashed still another pailful over the steaming dishes.

"There!" she said, with a triumphant air, as she raised the cover once more, "now dry. You are hot enough to do it in a hurry, and my morning's work is done in short order. Wouldn't you like to wash and

rinse and dry dishes as quick as that if you had them to do?"

"I never saw anything like it in my life," said Caroline, in intense admiration, "nor heard of anything like it. Do you always wash the dishes that way?"

"Three times a day," said Nancy triumphantly, "a great army of them. We use the most dishes in this house of any place I ever heard of; every time Kate turns around she uses seven or eight fresh ones. It used to make me downright vexed; but since we got this thing I don't care; it don't turn no harder when it's full than when it's half-full."

"Isn't it wonderful?" said Caroline, reaching for a cup, and admiring the fine polish on its shining surface. "Oh, dear! what a comfort such a machine would be to a woman I know."

"Your ma, I suppose," said Nancy, sympathetically; "if she has as many dishes to wash it certainly would."

Caroline laughed; she had visions just then of the large machine in her mother's already too crowded room, washing her few small dishes.

"It is not my mother; she has a little bit of a family, and only a few dishes to wash, but a lady lives a little way from us who keeps a boarding-house, and she does have such hard work to get her dishes washed clean. It takes a great deal of time. She told me once she had harder work to get a dish-washer to suit her than she did a cook."

"It is harder to do than cooking," said Nancy. "Take it year in and year out I would rather cook than wash dishes in the old-fashioned way, enough sight; but with this thing it is all done up in a few minutes and off your mind."

Caroline did not know that Nancy could not have cooked even a simple dinner if she had tried, but the cook did, and giggled. Then Caroline did her errand and ran away, her mind full of the new machine, and what a thing it would be if Fanny and Rufus Kedwin could get their mother one for Christmas. The word "Christmas" made her sigh; the idea of being away from home on that day of all others! But hard upon the sigh came a smile, for she already knew several pretty secrets for Christmas.

That afternoon, as she and Dorothy came from school, Dr. Forsythe opened the door of his reception-room and invited them in. It was after office hours, and he was alone. "Here is a letter for you," he said to Caroline. "Come in here and read it if you wish, while I talk to this young lady a bit," and he dropped into a great leather-covered chair and gathered Dorothy into his arms, beginning to take off rubbers and wraps as he asked about the day's delights; for school life was one long-drawn-out delight to Dorothy. Presently an exclamation of astonishment, slightly tinctured with dismay, made them both turn toward Caroline.

"No unpleasant news, I hope?" said the doctor.

Caroline blushed and smiled. "No, sir; it is good news, I suppose."

"But you are not quite sure?" Dorothy laughed. "Why, Caroline," she said, "you spoke exactly as though you were not quite sure; and how could that be? All news are either so very good or so very bad. There is no half-way about them, is there, father?"

"Not to a nature like yours," said her father, regarding her with the fond grave smile with which he often looked at his fair darling.

"Well," said Caroline, slightly embarrassed, "there are two people coming to the city whom I know, and of course I shall like to see them if I have a chance; but——" and here she stopped.

"Friends of yours?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, sir; at least I thought they were. Yes, sir; they are friends, of course. We used to be quite intimate, but——" She really did not know how to express herself, and this accounted for those awkward pauses.

"Is that a conundrum for Dorothy and me to guess?" Dr. Forsythe asked, smiling kindly.

"No, sir," with a little embarrassed laugh; "what I mean is, I do not know whether they will want to see me now." Then her cheeks flamed, and she felt that she had said a very strange thing.

Dr. Forsythe knew her but very little, and he did not know her mother or Ben at all. What would he think she had been doing to make her feel that perhaps friends with whom she had once been very intimate might not want to see her now? What could he think but that something very wrong in some way had happened? Yet how was she to explain to him what she really meant? Her embarrassment was painful, but the doctor did not seem inclined to help her; he sat looking thoughtfully at her with a kind, and yet a grave face. What he was thinking was something very different from Caroline's supposition. He did not distrust her in the least; and he had received letters enough from Mrs. Bryant to come to his own conclusions about her. The thought uppermost in his mind just then was, "What a mercy and a blessing it has been to us to secure for our darling such a girl as this to be with her all the time. A

wise, patient, loving, womanly little girl, who can be trusted, and whom Dorothy loves with all her heart. I shall certainly never forget one who makes so bright my darling's days." But the thought which always shadowed this father came with force to him just then. None knew better than he how few his darling's days might be.

Caroline, mistaking the gravity, came to a sudden conclusion; she reached forth the letter with a quick, nervous gesture. "Dr. Forsythe," she said, "have you time just to read that page? Then you will know what I mean."

"I will read it with pleasure if you would like to have me do so," the doctor answered. "Is it from Ben?"

"From Ben and mother; a little piece of it is mother's." And Dr. Forsythe read:—

"I've great news for you, Line; Fanny and Rufus Kedwin are going to Philadelphia for the holidays. That uncle of theirs about whom they were always talking has sent them money enough to go; and Mrs. Kedwin is working half the night trying to get them prinked up. Mother is helping her some. Rufus feels very large, and talks to Fanny until she thinks she feels large too, only she forgets to carry it out sometimes; they are both as silly as ever—more so, in fact.

"I'm going to tell you what they said last night, so you will understand things, and not feel troubled. They were over here with their mother, getting advice from our mother about how to make over a dress, and some other things. I said to Rufus, 'It seems funny to think of your seeing Line in a few days.' 'Humph!' Rufus said, 'I don't know whether we shall see her or not. She has done such a queer thing that I think she does not expect to have much to do with her friends.'

"'What do you mean?' I asked, and he laughed, and looked half-ashamed for a minute; then he said, 'Well, now, Ben, there's no use in going around a thing for ever; you know it is

very odd in Line to go and be just a common servant. My uncle's folks don't associate with such people, and they might think it queer if we had much to do with her. I think it was downright mean in Line to go and do such a thing when she wasn't obliged to; it makes it awfully disagreeable for her friends.'

"I felt for a moment as though I should like to knock him; but I held my tongue until I could speak about as usual, then I said, 'Line is a rather uncommon servant, I think you will find.'

"'Yes,' said Fanny, putting her voice in eagerly, as though she wanted to do something to make things pleasant; 'I know she must be splendid; I should like to be rich and have Line to wait on me. I should like nothing better.' Well, that was sillier than anything even Rufus had said, but she meant it well, so I could afford to laugh; and I said I could think of several things Line would like better, but of course they need not go and see her unless they chose.

"'Oh! of course we will see her,' Rufus said; 'we will go once, anyhow, because we have those things of your mother's to take to her, and that will be excuse enough to give to our uncle; but of course we cannot do as we would if she was not living out. I do not suppose they want to have people ringing the bell, and asking to see her, anyhow; mother says they won't; that people never like it.'

"Well, there was a good deal more of that kind of stuff, that I need not waste the paper to write down; I am only taking the trouble to tell this so that you will understand things better when they come, and not be hurt, you know. They are not worth your thinking of them twice, and you and I know it. If they would stay away entirely, I would be glad; then I would have kept still about their silly talk; but mother asked them to take your sack, and a few little things from Daisy, before we thought how they would feel. The truth is, I did not know before that they were such dreadful simpletons."

Then followed a few lines in another hand:—

"Ben has written you somewhat more fully than was worth while, daughter, about poor Rufus and Fanny; though I advised him to tell you just how they felt, that you might not be unpleasantly surprised when you met them. I hope my daughter

will have pity for the follies and failings of her friends; they are hardly to be blamed. They have been surrounded all their lives by people who held false views of life, so that very much cannot be expected of them. I continually hope for them that some influence may come to both in time to save them, else their lives will be a failure. If my Caroline will learn to pray for them, and will cultivate the sort of feeling which belongs to earnest prayer, she may be able to save them both."

CHAPTER XIX.

ENTERTAINING COMPANY.

"THAT is a letter to be proud of," said Dr. Forsythe, as he returned it; "not every girl has a mother who lives so as to be able to write it. Now about these friends of yours. When do you say you expect them? And do you know where their uncle lives?"

Caroline named a street and number. She did not know where it was, but the doctor recognised it as one of the obscure streets of the city, a long distance from his home.

"They are to come on Monday, you say? Well, let me see. On Tuesday they will probably be busy with their relatives. How would it do to send the carriage for them on Wednesday, and have them here when you and Dorothy return from school? You would like that, would you?"

"The carriage!" said Caroline, almost gasping the words. No thought of such remarkable distinction as that had occurred to her as being given to any of her friends.

"Certainly," said Dr. Forsythe, smiling; "it would save you a long trip down there to call upon them, and save time in every way. Then we could have them

remain to dinner with us, and get acquainted with your surroundings. You would have time to take them to drive, perhaps, and finally return them safely to their uncle's house by dark. I think that will be the better way to manage; that is, if you would like to show them such attention. Am I to understand that it would give you pleasure to do so?"

Caroline's eyes answered for her, even before she spoke; nothing that had ever happened to her gave her more thorough satisfaction. To be able to show attention to Fanny and Rufus; to show them just how she was treated in this elegant home to which she had come; to give them the pleasure of a ride in a handsome carriage, behind fine horses; to be able to act as mistress of ceremonies, and show them some of the wonders of city life,—nothing that the doctor had planned could give her greater pleasure.

"Oh, Dr. Forsythe!" she began, "I don't know how—I cannot tell what to say, nor how to say it——"

He interrupted her with a genial laugh. "Never mind, you have said it, or your eyes have for you; it is a very convenient thing sometimes to have eyes that talk. Very well, we will consider it settled, then, that the carriage goes on Wednesday to meet your friends. I hope it will be a pleasant day, and that you will have a good time, and be able to show them every possible attention; help them to feel at home in the city, and help them to realise that you feel at home. As for Dorothy, here, she likes new people, and I feel sure it will give her great delight to assist in entertaining them." And then Dr. Forsythe, who had spent more time than he often had to bestow upon them, hastened away.

Never was a brighter day than Wednesday; the sun

seemed to be doing what it could to celebrate the coming of Fanny and Rufus Kedwin to Philadelphia. If the truth must be told, however, these two young people away from home for the first time were the least bit in the world homesick. The cousins were older than themselves, and on this particular afternoon had an engagement which it was impossible to avoid, so they said, and had left Fanny and Rufus to the care of their aunt. She, good woman, was doing the best to entertain them, calling the baby to her aid. But the two, who were accustomed to a great deal of exercise in the open air, as the day wore along found it very dismal to be sitting in a small, dark room—at least, it seemed dark to them—looking out on a narrow street where nothing of very special interest was going on.

Fanny turned from the window at last with a long-drawn sigh, and said aloud, "I wish we could see Caroline this afternoon, don't you, Rufus?"

"Who is Caroline?" questioned the aunt, and an explanation followed. "A servant girl, eh?" she said, with lifted eyebrows. "I don't know; I am afraid it will be rather difficult to plan—your seeing her. People do not like to have their servants receive company, you know. It isn't always convenient. Besides, Dr. Forsythe lives a long way from here. Was your mother willing to have you go there?"

Fanny hastened to keep up the dignity of the family. "Mother didn't know; she said we must get Caroline's package to her, and that we must remember we were neighbours at home, and really we would truly like to see her. She is a good girl."

"Oh, I have no doubt of it; but—her circumstances are different from yours. However, we will ask your uncle about it, and bring it to pass if we can. If we

cannot plan so as to make it convenient for you to go there we can send the package, so that will be all right. Don't worry about it."

Rufus had taken no part in this conversation, for the reason that he was engaged in watching the movements of a splendid span of horses that were apparently picking their way through the narrow and muddy street; the driver, Rufus thought, was as fine a looking gentleman as he had seen in the city. To his great surprise, and of course delight, the horses were reined in before his uncle's door, and he turned with marked excitement to his aunt.

"Aunt Fanny, there's a splendid carriage and a magnificent span of horses stopping here, and the driver is getting down and coming to the door. Who do you suppose he wants?"

"Dear me!" said Aunt Fanny, "I don't know. I wish your uncle was at home. He is on business, of course. Fanny, will you take the baby and let me see what it is? Hannah is always out when I need her most."

She left the door ajar, and to their great delight they could hear every word that passed between their aunt and the stranger.

"Dr. Forsythe's compliments, and would it be convenient for Miss Fanny and Mr. Rufus Kedwin to dine with Miss Caroline Bryant that evening? The doctor had sent the carriage for the purpose of taking them to his house."

Rufus and Fanny looked at each other. Could they believe their ears? A carriage for the purpose of taking them to dine with Caroline Bryant!

"What in the world does it all mean?" muttered Rufus.

Then came his aunt, excited and voluble. A bustle of preparation followed, while that gentlemanly coachman paced back and forth on the pavement, and the high-stepping horses arched their necks and pawed the ground.

Before they had thoroughly realised what wonderful thing had happened to them, Rufus and Fanny were bowling along in a carriage the like of which they had never entered before. They had not yet recovered their senses enough to talk to each other; and indeed their eyes were so busily engaged in gazing out of the window on the strange sights which everywhere presented themselves as soon as they were in one of the main streets, that they had no desire to talk. But the drive was long, and before they had reached Dr. Forsythe's they found their tongues again, and began once more to wonder what it could all mean.

"Dear me!" said Fanny, looking out at last on the house, which seemed to her magnificent, and which bore the name "Forsythe" on the door-plate, "I must say I'm a little bit scared. Rufus, do you suppose there could be some mistake?"

"What is there to be scared about?" growled Rufus. "They sent for us, and here we are; if they hadn't wanted us they needn't have sent. It will be fun to see Line, anyhow."

By the time their wraps were disposed of, and they were seated in state in what seemed to them a grand parlour, Caroline came. Was it Caroline? It is true that not very many weeks had passed since they had seen her, but this young girl who came eagerly forward to meet them wore such a pretty dress, and had her hair done in such a new-fashioned way, and altogether

looked so much like what Fanny called "cityfied," that for a moment she was almost abashed.

But there was no mistaking Caroline's greeting. She was unaffectedly and heartily glad to see them. She asked dozens of questions about home, and mother, and Daisy, and Ben. "Just to think," she said, looking at them, "that you saw my mother and all of them only the other day! Oh, dear! I'm afraid you make me almost homesick."

"I shouldn't think you need be homesick here," said Rufus, looking around him with intense curiosity. "Say, Line, what does it all mean?"

"What?" asked Caroline, laughing.

"Why, this. How did you happen to ask us to come here, and send a carriage for us, and everything? I thought you were a—a——"

Caroline interrupted him, laughing again. "You thought I worked for my living, didn't you? Well, I do; at least they say I do, only it doesn't seem to me that I do anything at all except go to school and study and have good times."

Then came Dorothy, fair and sweet in her white dress, and with her gentle, womanly ways. She fascinated Fanny at once.

It was a day to be remembered for ever in the annals of the Kedwin family. From thenceforth for years they dated their experiences from "that day when we took dinner at Dr. Forsythe's, you know." Caroline showed them all over the beautiful house; they went to the library, to the conservatory, to the music-room, and saw pictures and flowers and books, and, what was more to both of them, I am afraid, than all of these, elegant furniture such as they had never seen before.

Truth to tell, Dr. Forsythe would have been

astonished had he known that they considered everything about his establishment magnificent. To those accustomed to the real elegance of city life this was only a large, plain, pleasantly furnished, cheerful house; but to Fanny and Rufus Kedwin it was paradise.

Caroline took them to her own room. There the two stared about them in astonishment over the beauty and elegance everywhere displayed.

"You don't say you have this all to yourself!" said Fanny. "I thought you slept with Dorothy, and took care of her."

"Oh, no, indeed! Dr. Forsythe doesn't allow any one to sleep with her; he doesn't think it is healthful; but the nurse sleeps very close to her, with folding doors between, and they are left open. No, I do not have any care of her at all at night; Dr. Forsythe says I am too young to have any burden of care upon me while I ought to be sleeping."

"He must be tip-top," said Rufus.

"He is the best man I ever knew," said Caroline promptly. Presently came the summons to dinner. The light and beauty of the great dining-room, the many courses served with exquisite taste and care, especially the elegant grandmother, hushed Rufus and Fanny into almost utter silence. Perhaps, however, the thing that astonished them most that evening was the fact that the dignified table waiter always said "Miss Caroline," and waited with as much deference to see how he could serve her as he did before the grandmother herself.

After dinner came the wonderful ride through the brilliantly-lighted streets of the city, the young folks resting back luxuriously among the cushions of the carriage. "Do you often have a ride in this thing?" Rufus asked.

"Every pleasant day," said Caroline, in an unconcerned tone. "Look, Rufus! there is our school building; that is where Dorothy and I go every morning. That's my room up there on the third floor. Oh, Fanny, you don't know what a splendid school it is!"

"You take music lessons and all, don't you?" asked Rufus.

"Yes, indeed! Oh! I like the music teacher ever so much. He has a quick, sharp way of speaking, and some of the girls think he is cross; but he isn't, a bit. Oh, Fanny, if you and Rufus and Ben could all be here at this school, wouldn't it be perfectly splendid?" The fact is, their young hostess was in a perfect flutter of delight. What a thing it had been for Dr. Forsythe to invite them to dinner and send the carriage for them, and treat them in every way as if they were distinguished guests! "He could not have done any more if I had been his own daughter," Caroline reflected, as she rode back alone, having bade a cordial good-bye to her friends, and promised to come and see them if she could. "But it is a very long way," she said, "from our house, you know, and we are very, very busy getting ready for the holidays."

She did not hear what Rufus said as he went grumblingly up his aunt's steps. "It seems to me Line puts on a good many airs about 'we' and 'us' and 'the holidays' and all. The next thing, you know, she'll be getting stuck up, and feel above us."

"I don't think she seemed a bit stuck up," said the gentler Fanny; "and I had a real good time, Rufus. I'm glad she has such a nice place. Isn't Dorothy lovely?"

"She has all the nice times, she and Ben," he said,

as they waited on the low white doorsteps for some one to let them into the house. "I always said Ben Bryant had all the luck there was in the world; some folks do have. No such nice times as Line is having ever came to you, Fanny, or ever will."

This time even Fanny could not help laughing a little. Certainly he had never found it necessary to envy Line Bryant before.

To Caroline, sitting back among the cushions watching the many scenes of interest, and thinking her thoughts, there came the memory of a day when she stood looking disconsolately out of the window watching a handsome carriage pass, and said to Ben, "I believe I could step gracefully into a carriage if I had a chance. I wonder if I ever will have a chance?" Here she was having her "chance," and it had not even occurred to her to notice whether she stepped gracefully into the carriage or not. She laughed a frank, glad laugh as she thought of that foolish sentence, and of how little, after all, graceful steps and matters of that kind amounted to when one came to real living, and wondered whether her other dreams —fancies that had been so numerous—if time should ever bring them to pass for her as it had the stepping into the handsome carriage—would amount to as little as that did. Then she dismissed them from her mind altogether, and gave herself up to the delights of the coming Christmas, and the thought of the surprises she was getting ready for mother and Daisy and Ben; she remembered how good Dr. Forsythe was to make it possible for her to have such surprises, and altogether was glad and thankful and happy.

"Hey!" called a shrill voice on the sidewalk, just as they were passing through one of the side streets

to reach a main avenue ; and leaning forward Caroline saw a woman gesticulating eagerly, apparently to the coachman. Joseph, who seemed to have eyes on every side of him when he drove, saw her, and promptly reined in his horses. Caroline, leaning forward, heard, "Isn't that Dr. Forsythe's carriage ? I thought so. Is he inside ? Look here, can't you drive right straight home and tell him my Dorry has got hurt dreadful ? He's been to a fire ; it's his leg ; I guess it's broke, and I don't know what to do, and the folks don't know what to do. I can't find no doctor that knows what he is about. They have just sent that little green fellow with white hair and no eyebrows from the hospital, and he don't know much, I guess. Anyhow, I'm most sure that Dr. Forsythe would come if he knew. Can't you let him know right straight off ? "

Joseph expressed his willingness to make all possible speed home and report as to the accident.

"You know me," said the woman, "don't you ? I'm Miss Perkins, the doll-maker. Dr. Forsythe will know ; he knows just where I am, and about Dorry, and everything."

"Miss Perkins, the doll-maker ! " Caroline had heard that name before. For the first time since she had been in Philadelphia it dawned upon her that she was in the city where lived the woman who had made so many of Daisy's dolls.

"Miss Perkins, Doll-maker," was to be found on almost every dollie that Caroline's patient fingers had dressed. She and Daisy had often wondered together about her : how she came to make dolls for a living ; why she made them ; whether she had little children who loved to watch her at work at them ; whether she learned to love the dollies and think about them

afterwards, and wonder who their mothers were; whether they were nicely cared for, and their clothes kept neat. Here was a chance to find out. She had a "Dorry," any way, and he was in trouble. Caroline felt almost as eager to get home as Miss Perkins had been to have them, and offered to carry the message at once to the doctor, while Joseph waited outside.

CHAPTER XX.

GREAT QUESTIONS SETTLED.

FOR a wonder the doctor was in, and at leisure. He recognised Miss Perkins' name at once, and himself opened the door and called to Joseph that he might take him, in a few minutes, to her house. Turning to Caroline he asked, "Do you know anything about her, Caroline? Your face looks as though some friend of yours had had an accident."

Then, very briefly, Caroline told the doll story, and explained how often Daisy had wondered about Miss Perkins.

"She has no one to care for but this poor nephew of hers," the doctor explained; "but he has given her more trouble than if she had half a dozen children of the ordinary kind. Dorry is inclined to live on the street altogether too much for his good.

"Would you like to go down there with me, and see the doll-maker and her nephew? You might possibly make yourself useful."

Startled as she was at the thought of a ride with Dr. Forsythe alone, and a call upon strangers, she yet could not resist the temptation. What a thing it would be to tell Daisy that she had seen the doll-maker herself! And perhaps there would be dolls scattered

around, in different stages of development, waiting to be described.

On the whole, Caroline decided that it would be a wonderful ending to a wonderful day.

"Did you enjoy your visit with your friends?" was the first question Dr. Forsythe asked, as the carriage rolled away.

"Oh, yes!" said Caroline eagerly. "Dr. Forsythe, I thank you so much. It was such a wonderful chance to show Fanny Kedwin all sorts of things that she wouldn't have had a chance to see. And then besides ——" and she came to one of her full pauses.

"Yes," said the doctor encouragingly, "and then besides——"

She turned toward him with a bright little laugh, and a flush on her face. "I don't know quite how to put the 'besides.' I don't know whether it was nice in me, or not, to feel a little glad that they should see what a pretty room I had, and how sweet Dorothy is, and how good everybody is to me."

"There is nothing especially wicked about that," said the doctor, with his grave smile, "provided you let it stop at just the right point. If you were glad because you thought they would be relieved, and would have a pleasant story to tell your mother, and it would cheer her heart, and because it would help them to get a little better view of life than they had had, that is one thing. But suppose you had been glad because you knew they would be discontented because their uncle's house didn't happen to be situated quite so pleasantly as they thought yours was, or because their uncle's horses didn't go so fast as ours do, that, you could see, would be quite another matter."

Caroline's flush deepened, and she answered only with respectful silence. Truth to tell, she was only too conscious that there was at least a little bit of this feeling lurking in her heart. Not so much for Fanny as for Rufus Kedwin; he had been such a hopeless boaster, and had said such disagreeable things about her to Ben; she could hardly help a little feeling of triumph over him.

The doctor's next question startled her so that she nearly tumbled from her seat.

"Are your young friends Christians?"

"Oh, no, sir!" she answered; "I don't believe they think much about such things. Their mother isn't a Christian, Dr. Forsythe; they don't go to church, any of them, much. Their mother keeps boarders, and she has to work very hard, and Fanny and Rufus don't like to go to church. They go to Sunday School, but they don't attend church, except when they can't help it. But that doesn't surprise me very much. I didn't use to like to go when I was at home. Our minister is—well, I don't know what he is, Dr. Forsythe. He is just as different from your minister as anything can be."

"Going to church ought not to be a matter of liking or not liking the minister, you know," said Dr. Forsythe, with his kind smile. "We are supposed to go to church to worship God; but I grant you that most people think too much of the minister part—as to whether he is agreeable or not, I mean. But my question reminds me of a more important one which I have been intending to ask for some time, How is it with Caroline Bryant—is she a Christian?"

Silence for what seemed to Caroline a long embarrassing time; then she said, speaking low, "I don't

know, Dr. Forsythe; I know I was not when I was at home. Mother and Daisy and Ben are, and I know it used to almost provoke me sometimes that Ben thought so much about these things. He didn't seem to belong to me so much, you know. But since I have come here, and have heard little Dorothy read in the Bible, and heard her pray, and heard you pray, Dr. Forsythe, I feel very differently. But I don't feel at all sure that I am a Christian. I want to be, I think I try to be; but I am not even quite sure what it is to be a Christian."

"It is a very simple matter," said Dr. Forsythe, "and one that can be decided in a few minutes. You may not be a Christian now, but if you honestly want to be there is no reason in the world why you should not become one before you leave this carriage to-night."

Caroline looked her surprise. "I thought Christians had to be very different from other people?"

"A Christian," said the doctor, "is one who takes the Lord Jesus Christ for his pattern, and tries to think and speak and act as He would have him. Now you can see that it rests with you to decide whether you desire to do this, and intend to do it. Sometimes people have a passing wish to become Christians, but it is not strong enough to stay with them and rule their lives. They do not come to a positive decision. They think, and hope, and say 'Perhaps' to-day, and to-morrow forget all about it; and the next day think a little again, but fail to bring themselves to that one point where the soul says, with all the power that is in it, 'I will.' Just as soon as you reach that point, my dear Caroline, you become a Christian."

But Caroline still looked bewildered. "Do not

people have to have their hearts changed?" she asked timidly.

"Indeed they do; but that is the Lord's part; we have nothing to do with it. What He has given to us is to decide. Let me see if I cannot make it plain by illustration. You know when I asked you to come and stay with us at our house, and care for Dorothy, and be a helper to us all, you thought about it a great deal, and were doubtful. One hour you felt as if you would come, and the next hour as if you would not for anything; and I, meantime, did not know what your decision was, could not plan for you in any way. But there came a moment when the thing was settled, when you said to me, 'I willc ome, Dr. Forsythe, and do the best I can.' Do you not see that there was one moment when the question was unsettled, and the next it was settled, so far as you were concerned, and for that matter so far as I was concerned? for the moment I received your answer I knew how to arrange.

"The illustration is faulty, for our Father in heaven knows what our decision will be. Nevertheless, from our side it is plain enough. He has seen fit to give this part of the matter to us. We must come to a conclusion. We must decide, and once for all, that as for us we are resolved to take Jesus Christ for our pattern, and serve Him as well as we can. The question is, Is Caroline Bryant resolved to do this? Does she mean to decide it to-night?"

Silence for a minute; then Caroline's voice, low but firm, "I want to, Dr. Forsythe." He turned his kind grey eyes upon her and smiled.

"The question is, Will you?" he said. "Are you so sure you want to that you are willing to bow your head now and here, and say, 'Jesus Christ, I have

decided to take Thee for my pattern, to try to serve Thee in all that I say or do or think. Wilt Thou take me from this moment, and make me Thine own ?'

"I do not mean, of course, that you must use just those words, but that is the thought which you will express. Are you willing to do this ?" It required a struggle to answer. Caroline felt that she was willing to say the words, but to say them before Dr. Forsythe was another matter. She hesitated, and looked up at him almost pitifully, with eyes full of tears. But he had no further word to speak, and simply waited. Suddenly she came to a fixed resolve. She wanted to be a Christian, she meant to be one ; if this was the way she would do it. What if she did blunder and stammer and get the words all mixed up ? Dr. Forsythe would not care, and surely Jesus Christ would not, if she really meant them with her heart. Down went her head into her hands, and a tremulous, yet very distinct voice murmured, "Jesus Christ, I want to be Thine own ; I want to serve Thee ; I want to speak and act and think just what Thou wouldst have me ; and if Thou wilt take me, I will begin to serve Thee now."

Instantly Dr. Forsythe's voice took up the story, "Lord Jesus, Thou hast heard the words of this Thy young servant ; take her from this moment for Thine own for ever, and help her in all ways to honour the Saviour to whom she belongs. This Thou hast promised, and this we believe Thou wilt perform. Amen." Just as the last word was spoken the carriage drew up before a little house, and the doctor, springing out, gave his hand to Caroline. She followed him up the steps, and while he waited for his ring to be answered, wiped the tears from her eyes.

Dorry's case was soon disposed of. "It is a broken leg, without any doubt," said Dr. Forsythe cheerily; "but we will have him comfortable in a few days, and in a few weeks as well as ever; and in the meantime he will be out of mischief;" this last spoken in lower tones to the long-suffering aunt, Miss Perkins.

"Yes," she said, with a little quivering attempt at a smile, "I thought of that—if he gets along all nice and right it will be a good thing for him, maybe. It might teach him a lesson, you know. He was where he hadn't ought to have been, or it wouldn't have happened. Dorry don't mean to do wrong, doctor; it is just kind of mischief; he is so brimful of mischief—that's what is the matter."

"It will do him good to rest from it a little while," said the doctor, drawing on his gloves, "and in the meantime the young people will have to look after him a little. My friend Caroline, here, will come and cheer him up, I fancy, once in a while—eh, Caroline?"

"I shall be very glad to, sir," said Caroline, "if I can."

She had held the lamp for which the doctor called, the gas not being in the right place to throw light where it was needed, and had watched with bated breath the swift, skilful fingers as they cared for the injured limb, and had felt very sorry for the pale-faced boy. Caroline liked boys—was used to boys. Had not Ben and she been companions always? She thought of several things she might do to cheer Dorry, so the smile was free and glad with which she answered the doctor's question.

"Bless your heart!" said Miss Perkins, patting her lovingly on the shoulder. "It would be worth a fortune to my Dorry if some nice young folks like you would

take a little notice of him ; he is that fond of company that he don't know what to do with himself. It isn't any wonder that he loves to be in the streets when he ought to be at home ; you see, there's nobody but me to keep him company. If you will come and see him once in a while I'll never forget it of you—never."

Christmas morning was as bright as though it had been a May day instead of December. With the first grey streaks of dawn Caroline awakened, and lay still in very gladness to think over it all.

It would not do to be lonely or sad to-day, even though she was far away from home. This was to be a rare Christmas Day, to be remembered in all her after years ; the first time she could think of herself as certainly a Christian. The days in which she had been indifferent to this matter were past ; the days in which she had been troubled in her conscience about the subject, and angry with herself and angry with others, were past ; the days in which she said, with timid voice, "I hope," "I think," were past.

Since the evening when she took that never-to-be-forgotten ride with Dr. Forsythe, and bowed her head in the carriage and gave herself away to Jesus, there had been in her heart a glad solemn feeling that she belonged to Him.

"I am a servant of Jesus Christ." She said the words often to herself, almost startled at first, but rejoicing in them. She said the words again this Christmas morning aloud steadily, with a glad ring in her voice. How glad mother would be, and Daisy, and Ben. She had written to them the story. She knew it would make their Christmas bright.

Then there were other lovely experiences connected

with this day. Such a wonderful box as she had sent, addressed to her mother; or rather boxes, for there were several of them. In the first place, the great "Pictorial, Unabridged Dictionary," which had long been the desire of Ben's heart, had actually gone to him by express.

A letter of his, which in an unguarded moment she had given Dorothy to read, had made mention of this desire in such a comical way that Dorothy had questioned and cross-questioned, and by degrees had got the whole story. Then a few days before Christmas she had announced her determination.

"I am going to send a Christmas present to Ben. I like him very much, and am most sure he would like me; and I like the dictionary, too. It is so interesting to find new words in it. I am going to send him the Pictorial Edition, with red-lettered edges and all. Papa said I might if I wanted to, and I want to ever so much. You needn't say a word, Caroline, I am just pleased to do it; that's the reason I am doing it. Won't it be fun?"

So the dictionary had gone, with the other things. The "other things" grew and grew in a wonderful manner.

There had been a white wool dress for Daisy, as like Dorothy's as possible, even to the soft, creamy satin ribbon around the waist. That, too, had to do with Dorothy.

It had been Caroline's ambition to make Daisy a new dress, taking every stitch in it herself. To this end she had taken her mother into the secret, and secured patterns and measurements and careful directions. To be sure the dress was to be only a neat pretty print, suitable for spring. The great charm of

it was to be Caroline's own work on it; and new dresses were not so common to Daisy Bryant that a pretty print had by any means lost its charms.

But plans had grown beyond all of Caroline's hopes or expectations. It was Mrs. Forsythe who asked her about it one day, Dorothy having told her what Caroline was doing for her little sister. It was she who had said, "Wouldn't you like to make Daisy a dress like Dorothy's? There was a very large pattern of white cashmere the last time, quite enough to make two dresses, and Dorothy will not need two alike. I should be very glad to have you take it, if you will, and make little Daisy a dress just like hers. I think Dorothy would like it. She has fallen in love with your little sister, Caroline."

And the plan, which at first so startled Caroline, had been so lovingly urged, and Dorothy was so eager over it, that it ended in two dresses going instead of one. A delicate spring print—white, with blue sprigs in it—and this soft, creamy white wool, finished at throat and wrists just like Dorothy's own, and tied around the waist with a soft white satin sash, just as she wore hers.

Caroline could fancy Daisy in it, and it made her heart beat to think how sweet she would look.

Her own plans for Ben had been to get him a new necktie and a pocket-handkerchief; for Ben, like all boys of his age, liked neckties—fresh ones, bright ones—and as for handkerchiefs, he never seemed able to find one when he wanted it.

This, too, became known in the household, and Dr. Forsythe took it up. "Neckties?" he said; "that is a good idea. I always used to be bothered about those two things when I was a boy. See here, let us give

Ben a necktie and handkerchief surprise. Mamma and I will each send him one. Who will join us?"

To Caroline's unutterable surprise even the stately grandmother smilingly consented to be one of the number, and of course Dorothy was delighted with the scheme. So instead of one, went five beautiful new neckties, and five fine handkerchiefs to Ben.

Caroline laughed over them as she lay in bed and thought it all out that morning. How surprised Ben would be, and how nice it was that he could have them to go with his new suit; for Ben had an entire new suit, "spick and span." Only a few days before he had written her about it, after this fashion:—

"If Rufus Kedwin were at home he would say I was in luck. What do you think? I have a new grey suit, coat, vest and trousers, and they fit me to a T. Where did I get them? Thereby hangs a tale. Last Tuesday night I stayed late, ever so late, at the office. There was some extra copying to be done, which was needed in a hurry, so I offered to stay and help. I sent a little chap to tell mother, so she wouldn't be scared, and pitched in. It was between eleven and twelve o'clock when I started for home. As I turned the corner by Peterson's—the clothing store, you know—I saw a bright light. I thought to myself that somebody must be sick to be lighted up like that so late; but the more I looked the more the light worried me. It didn't seem like a lamp; it would flare up, and then die down. I thought perhaps there was a fire in the grate. At last I concluded to cross the road and investigate, and it was a lucky thing I did. There was a fire in the grate which had been covered when the folks went to bed; but it had crept around, somehow, to the woodwork, nobody seems to know exactly how; and the long and short of it is that the fireboard and everything near it that was burning was ablaze. Well, I made a rumpus, of course; rang the bell, and knocked and yelled all at once. Mr. Peterson and the clerks came flurrying down, and we had a great time. I didn't get home until two o'clock, and mother was beginning to be frightened. As good fortune would have it, Mr. Peterson was

pleased to think that I saved his house; and between you and me I guess I did, for there was nobody stirring anywhere around, and they said the building would have been in a blaze in a very few minutes more. Well, ma'am, what did Mr. Peterson do but send for me the next morning, invite me into the back room, and fit me out to as nice a suit as ever a fellow had in his life, overcoat and all! Did you ever hear the like of that? I don't suppose he knew how much I needed it, or rather how much mother needed it. I got along with the old clothes better than she did, I verily believe. Of course I was glad enough to get them, but mother was so glad, Line, that she cried."

And then Line had cried over this letter, and laughed over it, too; and laughed again this morning, to think how pleased Ben would be with the neckties and handkerchiefs to go with the new suit.

"And the dictionary," she said aloud; "oh, that dictionary! Won't it be just too splendid for anything?"

CHAPTER XXI.

"MERRY CHRISTMAS."

BUT, after all, the gift which had gone carefully boxed to her mother, Caroline believed, would be the crowning delight of this Christmas Day. That had been such a surprise that even now it almost took away her breath just to think of it. She had been in the sewing-room one day, getting some directions from that good woman about Daisy's dress—for to tell the truth she proved to be a most helpful practical adviser about that dress. Mrs. Packard was sewing busily on the machine, and Caroline, watching her, thought, as she had a hundred times before, "If mother only had a sewing-machine!" But this thought she kept to herself. "Is that another machine over in the corner?" was the only thing she said aloud.

"Yes," said Mrs. Packard, reaching the end of her seam and stopping to cut the thread, "it is; and it is a machine that I don't like a bit, either. That is, I don't know anything about it, and don't want to. When I first came here the woman who had been sewing for these folks got that machine ready, and bragged it up, and thought of course I was going to sew on it. It was new-fangled in every way to me, and I didn't like it at all. I worried and bothered over it for a day or two, and then Dr. Forsythe came in and asked how I

liked it, and I told the truth, as I generally do; and that very day he sent up the kind of machine I was used to, and told me to shove the other one into a corner and let it go. He said a woman who had to do all the sewing for an entire family ought at least to have the comfort of sewing on the kind of machine she was used to and liked. There aren't many men like Dr. Forsythe in this world, my dear."

Caroline heartily assented to this truth, then went over and examined the discarded machine. "Why, it is just the kind my mother likes best!" she said, with a little squeal of delight, which ended in a sigh.

Watchful Mrs. Packard, who had become a good friend to Caroline, heard the sigh. "Does your mother sew on a machine?" she asked.

"No, ma'am," said Caroline, with a slight laugh, "not very often. When she goes to Mrs. Hammond's to sew, and to one or two other places where they have machines, she does, and this is the kind they have, and she likes it ever so much; but at home she sews by hand."

"'My land!" said Mrs. Packard, "I should think that would be hard work. She can't accomplish very much sewing, it appears to me."

"She does," said Caroline firmly, "accomplish ever so much sewing. She sews hard all winter long; makes dresses and shirts and underclothing, and all sorts of things for people, taking every stitch by hand."

"For the land's sake!" said Mrs. Packard, "what in the world does she do it for? Nobody does that any more."

Caroline laughed a little sorrowfully. "She does it just as we do a good many things, Mrs. Packard, because she has to; she hasn't any machine of her

own, and we children haven't got old enough yet to buy her one; but we are going to some day. That is the first thing Ben and I are going to do."

Mrs. Packard kept her own counsel, and Caroline went away, unaware that she had said anything of special interest to anybody.

Neither did she connect this conversation with the question which Dr. Forsythe asked her one day. How did her mother employ her time in the winter? Did she use a sewing machine? What sort of a sewing machine would she use if she could have her choice? He ended by presenting the machine which stood unused in the corner to Caroline, with full permission to do with it what she pleased. Of course he knew what she would please to do, and himself planned that the machine should be sent to the Rooms to be put in thorough order, properly packed, and forwarded to Mrs. Bryant. Had there ever been a Christmas Day like this for her daughter Caroline? That young lady purposely refrained from turning herself in bed to take a look at certain packages which she felt pretty sure were piled on her chair or table, her object being to have the delights of the day last just as long as possible. First, she must give her thoughts to mother and Ben and Daisy.

Oh, I omitted to say that six new dollies, carefully dressed, and with their elaborate wardrobes packed in a trunk, had also been forwarded to Daisy. These were for the store, of course. Perhaps it is not necessary to tell you how heartily Dorothy entered into those plans, and how very helpful her box of silks and laces, as well as her skilful little fingers, had been in the work.

Dr. Forsythe had arranged that instead of a family gathering in the mother's room to receive the Christmas

morning gifts, each person should have his or hers in their own room. Dorothy had demurred a little at this, and Caroline had wondered over it, until the doctor had told her in a grave aside his reasons.

"There is less nervous strain and excitement about the matter planned in that way," he said. "If our little girl receives her presents when quite alone and all is quiet around her, she will have opportunity to get over the first excitement; and excitement is something which we must guard her against, you know. It is becoming increasingly important that we should do so."

At last Caroline gave a spring from her bed, and set about the business of dressing, resolved that until hair and bath were disposed of, and she was ready all but her dress, she would not look at a single gift.

"I know I have some things there," she said, with a laugh, and resolutely turning her back to the chair; "but I hope I have self-control enough to let them alone until the proper minute."

The "proper minute" came at last, and Caroline found her powers of self-control taxed to their utmost. Every gift there was a surprise. She dived first into a medium-sized box, and found it to be a very handsome one, silk lined, from the stately grandmother; a glove and handkerchief box, with six pairs of gloves, and one dozen fine hemstitched handkerchiefs, with her initials carefully worked in the corners.

What a wonderful gift to come to Caroline Bryant! Six pairs of gloves at once, for a girl who had gone even to church many a time bare-handed, because her gloves were so shabby she was not willing to wear them.

Then came a large box, so large that she could but wonder what it could contain. A card lay on

the top, addressed in a delicate hand, "For my Caroline, with Mrs. Forsythe's dear love."

The little squeal with which Caroline discovered the contents was quickly suppressed, lest Dorothy should hear. A new dress, soft, fine, and beautiful; in colour a very dark maroon, beautifully made and beautifully trimmed. To one sleeve was pinned a paper which said, again in Mrs. Forsythe's writing, "To be put on early on Christmas morning, and worn through the day."

The doctor's gift was a Bible. How elegant it was Caroline did not know. She only knew the covers were soft, the paper was as thin almost as a cobweb, yet seemed very strong; and while it was small enough in size to be conveniently carried to church and Sunday School, it contained so many other things besides the Bible that her amazement was very great over the thought that so much could be put into so small a space, and yet have the print so clear and beautiful. "It had as much in it as the large family Bible at home—grandmother's, you know," wrote Caroline to her mother; "yet that is as much as ten times larger than this." Her full name in gold letters gleamed from the back.

Instinctively she had left Dorothy's little package to the last. "It is small and sweet, like herself," she said, clasping the tiny white box, and wondering what treasure the fair darling had bestowed upon her. This time her voice did penetrate to Dorothy's room, and made her laugh. How could it be helped?

What should lie gleaming at her from the delicate folds of cotton which surrounded it but a tiny chatelaine watch, ticking away with all its might!

"It is such a trouble to be always looking at the

schoolroom clock," said the card lying by the side of the watch; and underneath, "For my dear, darling Caroline, from Dorothy."

I am sure you will excuse Caroline for being so wildly excited that it seemed almost impossible to get into her new dress and be ready for breakfast. So interested was she in her own belongings, and especially in viewing herself in the glass when the new dress was properly adjusted, that she well-nigh missed the package pushed quite under her chair; and when at last she spied it she stopped wonderingly, and said aloud, "What can that be? There are certainly no more presents this morning! I almost hope there are not. I do not see how I could bear any more." Still, she stooped and drew out a neat, square-looking package, done up in brown paper, and read, between exclamations of astonishment and bewilderment, the address, "Benjamin F. Bryant, with Christmas greetings from Dr. Forsythe and Dorothy."

What could that mean? If any person living had had Christmas greetings from Dr. Forsythe and Dorothy it was surely Benjamin Bryant. Had she not seen them herself go off by express?

While she stood staring and wondering, a slip of paper in the corner of the package caught her attention. She drew it forth and read, "To be opened by Caroline, and delivered by her to Ben at her convenience."

"Dear me!" she said, half-laughing, half-crying, "at my convenience. If Ben doesn't get it, whatever it is, until I can deliver it to him, I am afraid he will have to wait a long time. I must look this minute and see what the dear boy has. Oh, oh, what people they are!"

It seems a pity to have to tell you that Caroline Bryant sat flat on the floor, new dress and all, and made her eyes red by crying for joy for the contents of that package.

Behold, it was a new stenograph, of very dainty finish, packed neatly in its own leathern case! Such a present as that she was sure meant a great deal to Ben—meant more suits of clothes, and books, and comforts for mother and Daisy; for Ben, with such a knowledge of the stenograph as he would soon have when it was in his possession, would be able to earn his living. Dr. Forsythe had said so.

"What will he say?" she said, meaning Ben. "I wonder if I shall write to him about it, or keep it until I go, or what I ought to do? It does not seem as though I ought to keep it from him until spring. Oh, Ben, you don't know what is coming to you!"

While she was bathing her eyes, trying to take away the redness which the happy tears had brought, there came a gentle tap at her door. She made all speed to open it, and there stood Dr. Forsythe.

"Merry Christmas!" he said, interrupting her eager "Oh, Dr. Forsythe!" then laughing over her "Oh! I forgot—Merry Christmas!

"Dr. Forsythe," she continued eagerly, "I've seen them all, and I don't know what I shall do! I don't know how to say what I think and feel, and I couldn't say it any way."

"Never mind," said Dr. Forsythe; "it isn't necessary, and besides, there isn't time. We have delayed breakfast this morning to give you young people time to get over your first fever, but it is getting late. It seems to me I haven't seen that dress on before. It is very becoming. Now I will agree to imagine all the

rest of the things that you would like to say, because I want you to go down to the back parlour for me on an errand. The fact is, there is a little present there for you which has been omitted; or at least it was not convenient to put it into your room. You will find it in the back parlour by the south window."

"Another present!" said Caroline; "how can I possibly have another present? I have everything now that anybody could want."

"Very well," he said, smiling, "you may do as you like about accepting the present after you see it. If you think you would like it, and like to keep it with you to-day, you may do so; if not just let it be where it is in the corner, and I'll attend to it; but run right down now, please, and see about it."

"Is it marked?" asked Caroline, almost breathless with excitement, as she ran down the stairs. Then Dr. Forsythe laughed merrily.

"No, it isn't marked," he said; "at least it hasn't your name on it. I think you will recognise it. If you do not, come back and I will go and assist you."

Caroline sped through the hall on swift feet, her brain in a whirl of wonderment. "What could there be in the back parlour for her, after all the elegant presents she had received?"

She pushed open the door and made all speed toward the south window, looking curiously on the floor, on the chairs, under the sofa as she passed. No package was to be seen; nothing but the usual furniture of the room. "Perhaps he meant in the window-seat," the searcher said, and put out her hand to push aside the curtain, drew it suddenly back, giving a faint scream the while—and was folded in Ben's arms.

Such a time as there was in the back parlour for

the next five minutes may be better imagined than described. "I came last night on the twelve o'clock," Ben explained, in answer to her bewilderment. "Yes, I have been in the house all night; they would not let me disturb you. The doctor said you would not get any more sleep if I did; and I was tremendously sleepy myself. Oh, yes! they expected me; I came with Mr. Holden. He got a pass for me. The superintendent of the road is a particular friend. He is going on to New York to visit Miss Webster—Mr. Holden is, you know, not the superintendent. Dr. Forsythe wrote to me to come. He said I was to be your Christmas surprise; and he came himself in the carriage to the depôt, and asked Mr. Holden to come and spend the night with us; but he couldn't, he was expected in New York this morning. I say, Line, isn't he magnificent, though?"

Caroline knew he meant Dr. Forsythe, and not Mr. Holden, though well aware that his adjective would do to apply to either gentleman.

"Well," she said, catching her breath and speaking almost hysterically, "I was never so surprised in all my life. Did you ever see anything so wonderful? Oh, Ben! how nice you look in your new coat. And the neckties got there in time for you to wear one, didn't they? How nice that was of mother to get them out for you. Oh, Ben, Ben! it's too good to believe," and she reached up and kissed his brown cheeks ecstatically.

"It is a high old time," said Ben, "and no mistake. I thought when my Christmas presents came that Christmas had done everything it could for me for once; and I wondered what mother meant by giving me my presents the night before. You see, she and

Mr. Holden got this up, and didn't say anything to me until about an hour before the train started. Line, I don't know that I ever saw anybody in my life that clothes made such a difference in; you are just as pretty as a picture, did you know it? What do Fanny Kedwin and Rufus say to all this? Where are they, by the way? Will I be likely to see them?"

"You'll be likely to take dinner with them," said Caroline complacently. "Dr. Forsythe has invited Fanny and Rufus to come here to dinner at five o'clock this afternoon. He asked me if I would like to have them come, and of course I would, because they seem like a bit of home; and another thing, I knew they would enjoy it. They are having kind of a lonesome time at their uncle's. Their cousins are older than they; and then, I don't think Rufus and Fanny are dressed well enough to suit them, and they go off and have good times, and leave those two alone with their aunt. Dr. Forsythe is going to send the carriage for them, and make everything just as pleasant as he can.

"Oh, Ben! you must come right away. There is the bell for prayers, and I haven't kissed Dorothy good-morning yet. You can't think how sweet she is. Sometimes my heart just aches to have Daisy see her; they would love each other so much!"

"Daisy has named her dearest doll after her already," said Ben, following his sister down the long hall, and halting her just before the dining-room door was opened to say, "Look here, Line, this is new business to me, being in a city house, you know; you must catch hold of my coat tail or something if I don't do just right. I suppose I'll make a hundred mistakes."

"No, you won't," said Caroline cheerily; "it isn't half so dreadful as I thought it would be. You just

have to be kind and pleasant, and think about other people's comforts instead of your own—just as you always do, Ben—and then you are all right. Of course there are little things to notice at the table; but it is easy to notice how other people do, and do like them. I've got over some of my silliness, Ben, since I've been here."

And then Caroline laughed to herself gleefully, not over anything which had just been talked about, but over the state of mind Ben would be in if he only knew what was waiting up in her room for him at that minute.

The ordeal of breakfast was got through with very nicely. Caroline found herself proud of, instead of being embarrassed for, the manly boy who sat erect in his chair and answered promptly all questions that were put to him, not merely with a "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," but volunteering little bits of interesting items connected with his journey, or with the town in which he lived. Also he showed the most respectful attention when the grandmother spoke, and when the meal was over, and she was about to leave the room, sprang forward and opened the door for her. This was no more, it is true, than he was in the habit of doing for his own mother; but some boys wouldn't have thought of it. Therein Ben found he had an advantage over many country boys who make their first visit to city homes; he had been brought up to be respectful to his mother, and indeed to all persons older than himself.

To his satisfaction he found that the training in this and many other small matters which he had received in his own quiet home stood him in good stead when he came where they used what Fanny Kedwin called "cityfied ways."

CHAPTER XXII.

"LUCK."

CHRISTMAS DAY was one long-drawn-out delight to the young people. The only mar to the pleasure of the occasion was Rufus Kedwin's ill-concealed envy, joined to the often repeated sentence, "I never saw anything like the luck you and Line have, Ben Bryant, never!"

"I think as much," Fanny would occasionally add; but her thoughts did not dwell on the subject, like her brother's. What held her to unbounded interest was Caroline's dress. "Oh, Line!" she said, "what a perfectly lovely dress that is! I never expected to see you in such an elegant rig."

"I am sure I never expected it," answered Line, laughing. "I don't know what I have done to have these people so good to me. It isn't anything that I have done. It is just because they are all so lovely themselves they can't help being good to other people. Did you ever see anybody so sweet as little Dorothy?"

"And she gave you that watch, all with her own money," said Fanny, feasting her eyes upon the dainty little creature, which was drawn out for the dozenth time for exhibition. "She must have lots to spend; I suppose they all have lots of money. It's easy enough to be generous when you have plenty of money

to do with. I'd like to give away things myself, if I ever had anything to give."

"I never could understand," said Rufus loftily, "why some folks should have all the money and other folks all the hard work, any more than I can understand why some folks have all the luck, and other folks get along the best way they can. Nobody ever gave me a suit of clothes, or ever will. Fanny will be an old woman before she will have a watch, I daresay."

"Oh, come now!" said Ben, "don't you keep up that old croak, Rufus Kedwin. I am sure you have had 'luck.' How long since you and Fanny had tickets sent you to come to Philadelphia?"

"They are no great things," said Rufus, determined to look on the dark side. "They didn't cost my uncle a single cent. One of the directors of the road gave them to him for something he did."

This amused both Ben and Caroline, and they laughed merrily.

"What earthly difference does that make?" asked Ben, when he could speak again. "Do you calculate the value of your gifts by the money they cost somebody else?"

"It makes a great difference to me," said Rufus gloomily. "It is easy enough to give things that don't cost anything. You don't care who gets them. But when it comes to watches and machines, that is something like. Look at that thing of yours now; that cost lots of money, I'll be bound, and you can earn some money with it, just as likely as not. If I had it I know I could. Who do you suppose will ever think of giving me a stenograph? And here is Line getting music lessons and new dresses and things, and living like a princess; I tell you, it's all luck."

Some portions of this speech were much less polite than they might have been, if Rufus had been a thoughtful boy. It is true, Caroline's little presents to him and to Fanny had not cost a great deal of money; but they had cost her a great deal of care and thought, and some hours of work, and it seemed rather hard to be almost told that they weren't of any consequence. However, she was used to Rufus Kedwin.

Ben, at the mention of his wonderful and beloved machine, fingered the keys lovingly, and smiled down upon it.

"This is a great big thing," he said; "I am willing to own it. It is the biggest thing I ever had in my life. I thought when my Pictorial Dictionary came I had got to the highest possible notch; but I am bound to believe this is a little ahead—though I wouldn't say so if that sweet little mouse of a Dorothy were here—because, as you say, Rufus, I can make it earn something for the rest of the folks, as well as give pleasure to me. But I'll tell you what it is, old fellow: I offered to teach you the alphabet, you know, and show you the new-fashioned way of spelling, and all that; and I'll repeat the offer, and teach you how to write on this thing just as soon as I learn myself, then two of us will understand it, you see."

Rufus eyed it gloomily. "What good will that do me?" he said gruffly. "I haven't any machine, and am not likely to have. I don't see any earthly use in bothering my brains learning how to use it. If there was any prospect of my ever having one that would be another matter."

Dr. Forsythe, who, unknown to the young people, was in his reception-room, which opened from the back parlour, now came forward and joined them, entering

into conversation with Caroline's guests in a genial way, as he knew well how to do. Then as he turned to go he laid his hand kindly on Rufus's shoulder. "I overheard some of the things you said, my young man," he said pleasantly; "heard your opinions about luck, and matters of that kind. I am a good deal older than you, and naturally know a little more of life, and I am inclined to think you will take it kindly if I give you a little advice."

Rufus blushed, and stammered something which was intended to be an assent, and the doctor continued, "What a great many people are disposed to call 'luck' is merely a natural working out of circumstances, bound to follow almost as a matter of course. For instance, in regard to these two young friends of yours: I heard enough to lead me to understand that in your opinion they have, in some respects, been 'lucky.' If I were to be asked my judgment in the matter I should say 'No, they have been faithful. They have done the best they could under the circumstances in which Providence has placed them, and the natural result has followed.'

"Our friend Caroline is naturally a very grateful little woman, and imagines that she has received some wonderful gifts. The actual fact is, that what she has done, and is doing every day of her life, for my little daughter, could not be paid for in money, could not be estimated at a money value. The gifts which she has received are only the tokens of our gratitude to her for being at all times and in all places faithful, efficient, and trustworthy. That is a great deal to say of one so young as she; but it is due to her that I say it, here and now. Her mother and her friends have reason to be proud of her. Not that faithfulness is a thing which

should be so rare as to win our admiration; but I am sorry to say it has been my experience in life that it is very rare to find one who in all things does the best he knows.

"As for Ben here, there is a sense in which he may be said to have earned his stenograph; at least I should never have thought of giving him one if I had not been surprised and interested by hearing that he had set himself to work in an earnest, business-like fashion to learn to read its characters, at a time when he had not the least idea that he would ever possess a machine; and had held so steadily and so successfully to his work that his sister here tells me she has been in the habit, for the last few weeks, of writing her letters to him on the machine, and that his replies have shown that he had no difficulty in reading the letters. That, to me, showed a degree of perseverance and pluck which seemed worthy of recognition. Therefore I presented his sister with a machine for his benefit and for mine.

"I have no doubt but that some time in the future he will make me satisfactory copies of valuable work by the aid of this very machine. So you see there is an element of selfishness in my plans," he added, smiling. "But the thing which I wished you specially to understand was, that both Benjamin and Caroline have brought about by their own force of character the things which seemed to you to have been brought about by a series of happenings. And really, my dear boy, this is a history of most lives. As a rule we secure in this world what we work for. We reach the heights that we have climbed for. And now, having preached to you all a little sermon, I will invite you to take a ride. After making a call on our friend Dorry, Joseph

will drive wherever you direct, and you can have from two to three hours of sightseeing before dinner. Mrs. Packard says the baskets are ready, Caroline, and the carriage will be at the door by the time you are all ready for it."

They found Miss Perkins in a flutter of delight over the Christmas presents which had already reached her, having been sent the night before, in order that Dorry might have as early a Christmas as any boy in the city. The baskets which Caroline had in charge had to do with Miss Perkins' and Dorry's Christmas dinner; and Caroline knew there wouldn't be a better dinner served in the city than would come out of those same baskets.

Dorry, who had reached what Dr. Forsythe called "the comfortable stage," but which to himself was a very restless and uncomfortable period, was shyly glad to see them all. He and Caroline were very good friends, she having been there several times since the accident; but Dorry's heart went out immediately to Ben, and the look out of his large eyes was so wistful when they rose to go, that Ben, taking a swift second thought, drew Caroline aside.

"Look here," he said, "suppose you drive on for half an hour without me, and let me try to cheer up this little chap? He has had a lonesome day so far. I guess he's a boy who is used to rampaging around wherever he has a mind, and to lie on a bed and keep still with only his aunt to talk to is tremendously hard work. I was sick myself once, and even with mother and Daisy on hand it was as much as I could do to endure it."

"Oh! but, Ben," said Caroline, in distressed undertone, "how can I spare you to-day? It's Christmas,

you know, and I haven't seen you for so long; and I was going to take you a beautiful ride."

"I know it," he said cheerily; "but there is to-morrow and the next day—I am not going back until Saturday—and I only planned for half an hour. There will be a good hour and a half after that. I think it will be the right thing to do, Line, don't you?"

"I suppose so," she said, with a half-laugh; "but right things are real hard sometimes. I feel just as selfish as an owl."

Ben laughed gleefully. "I don't believe owls are selfish," he said; "you mean the historical piggy, don't you?"

Miss Perkins, when she understood the situation, was divided between delight and dismay—delight that Dorry was to have a little company all to himself, and dismay that Ben was to use up part of his Christmas ride.

"It is very good of you," she said eagerly; "there isn't a boy in a hundred that would do it, or even think of it, I am sure of that. Dorry will be delighted. Ever since he got through looking at his Christmas presents he hasn't known what to do with himself, poor boy. I could go out and get my lovely dinner started if you were here to keep him company; but then, it is too bad for you to lose your ride, as you are here just for a few days with your sister. It isn't to be thought of for a moment."

"All right," said Ben cheerily, "we won't say anything more about it. There is the carriage, Line; get yourself started as quick as possible. Miss Perkins, you go out and start that Christmas dinner. I am afraid it won't be ready in time. Dorry is going to be famously hungry, I know. He and I will have the jolliest kind of a time for the next half-hour."

There was no escaping Ben's cheery determination to manage the programme according to his own fancy. Even Caroline, when she saw the look in Dorry's eyes, decided that the sacrifice was worth making; and only Rufus, as he went down the steps, grumbled in undertone to Fanny, "Ben Bryant wouldn't be happy if he couldn't manage everything and everybody."

"Well, he's a real nice manager," said Fanny, "to plan for other people and not for himself most always."

A great deal can be said in a half-hour. Poor Dorry hadn't been so "heartened up," as Miss Perkins called it, since the accident. For one thing, it was a great relief to tell somebody all about it in his own way; a boy, who would be interested in all the particulars, and ask all the questions, and give him a chance to prove that he wasn't doing anything so very dreadfully out of the way, but was actually being a very helpful personage when the accident happened.

"She thinks I ought never to go near a fire," he said, twisting his head restlessly on the pillow. "And for that matter, that I oughtn't to cross a street when there was a horse within a mile either way, and I oughtn't to get on to a street car till it has stood five minutes stock still. The fact is, that there aren't many things that a fellow can do, according to her notions."

Ben laughed merrily. "I can guess how it is," he said in a sympathetic tone. "She is a woman, and women are not used to being out in the street where the crowds are, and they oughtn't to be. I know all about it. My father has been dead for a good many years and I have had my mother to think about and to take care of, just as you have your aunt. One of the ways I have of taking care of her, which helps her more than anything I can do, I believe, yet awhile, is

keeping her from worrying, you know, by letting her understand that there are certain things I won't do. I go an eighth of a mile out of my way every day of my life just to avoid crossing the railroad at a certain point where my mother thinks it's dangerous. It isn't, you know, any more than it is at any other point, but mother thinks so, and she can't help it; and as I have her to take care of, why, of course I save her worrying about that.

"There must be as many as a dozen things that I do, or don't do, just for the sake of saving mother. She likes it, and it doesn't hurt me, and it's about as good a way as any to help along."

New lessons these for Dorry! Miss Perkins will have reason to bless the hour when Ben Bryant gave up his ride in the handsome carriage, and stayed to visit with her boy.

So he had his aunt to look after and take care of, had he? Such an idea had never entered his busy, restless little brain before. That he should cease jumping off street cars when they were in motion, or running across the roads directly under horses' feet, or walking down town on the railroad track, in order to help take care of his aunt, was an entirely new idea. Up to this point, if he thought anything about it, he would have supposed that his mission in life was to worry his aunt. That is, he had imagined that if he failed to do any of these manly things he would be a baby, instead of a boy. Here was a great tall fellow, talking in a business-like way about taking care of his mother, and actually giving up his own ways, and taking extra steps and a great deal of trouble, just so she wouldn't be worried when there was nothing to be worried about.

"You are a kind of a queer chap," he said, eyeing Ben reflectively. "Say, honour bright, ain't you different from other fellows?"

Ben laughed merrily. "I don't know about that," he said; "I'll tell you what I do think, though, that I have better times than most folks. I don't know another boy of my age who has as downright good a time as I do. I didn't use to think so. I used to growl a good deal because I hadn't money, and couldn't go to school, and couldn't do forty other things that I wanted to. But things are changed with me."

"I tell you what," said Dorry emphatically, "I think you are queer. Do you really work every single evening, either for the man you are working for, or else studying at home?"

"Every evening but Thursday," said Ben. "On Thursdays I don't do a great deal of studying; I am later at the office than I am on other days, and I get home just in time to eat my supper, and dress for prayer-meeting. And after we come home from prayer-meeting there is almost always a letter from my sister to read; then we talk it over and have good times together, and I have sort of given up the idea of studying Thursday night, and have made a pleasure evening of it."

"A pleasure evening!" repeated Dorry, almost a contemptuous note in his voice; "I told you you were queer. I suppose you like to go to prayer-meeting, too?"

"Yes," said Ben gravely, "I like it; not as well as I might under some circumstances. They don't appear to me to know how to manage a prayer-meeting in the church that I go to in a way to interest young

folks a great deal; but then, I should go all the same if I didn't like it even as well as I do. I am not such a baby, I hope, as not to be able to go to a prayer-meeting once a week because some of the talk they give is dull, and some of it is beyond me so I can't understand it. If I couldn't understand a dozen words they said, I should hope I would have sense enough to go."

"I don't see why. What's the use in a fellow going where he doesn't understand anything, and doesn't enjoy it?"

"Oh! well, there are some things to enjoy, Dorry. I haven't in a good while listened to a prayer that hadn't a great deal in it for me. And I like the singing first rate, and the words of the hymns I like. You see, my boy, I belong to the family; and it is a kind of family gathering that we have once a week. Some of the aunts and uncles and cousins I like better than others, but I have a kind of general interest in them all, and don't want to be away when the time comes for the family gathering. Don't you know how it would be, going out to a Christmas dinner? There might be two or three cousins that you wouldn't like very well, and maybe an uncle or so who wasn't exactly to your mind; but after all it would be the Christmas gathering of the relations, and you wouldn't like to be counted out."

"I'd go there for the dinner," said Dorry, with a laugh.

"No, you wouldn't. If they sent you the same kind of dinner exactly, and you had to eat it on the corner of the table at home alone, you wouldn't like it half so well."

"I don't know what you are talking about, anyhow,"

said Dorry. "A Christmas dinner and a prayer-meeting are two different things."

"That's so," said Ben gravely; "I'll tell you what I mean, Dorry. I'm a servant of Jesus Christ, and I like to go where He is talked about, and where people gather who are in the same service. We are soldiers, you see, and He is our Captain. If you belong you understand it, and if you don't, why, you don't."

Dorry's head was turning restlessly on his pillow again; the conversation was getting too grave for him. Ben hastened to change it.

"Do you like machines?" he asked briskly. "I've got a new one, a Christmas present, the cutest thing out—a stenograph. Did you ever see it?"

"Never heard of it," said Dorry promptly. "What is it for?"

"To write with. It makes five little dashes, all exactly alike, and yet you can read them after you have learned how; just as you can read another language, you know."

"That's nice," said Dorry, interested at once; "I always thought it would be fun to know some language that other folks didn't."

"So did I," said Ben, "and it is great fun. That is one reason I like Latin so well. This stenograph is a big thing; it is a shorthand writer, you know. When you have learned how, you can write down what a speaker says, every word of it, and take notes at the office, and do all sorts of work with it. I expect to earn money with mine."

"I'd like to see it," said Dorry, his face aglow with interest. "I always did like machines first-rate. I used to think I could make one if I had a chance. One of these days I am going to try."

"Good!" said Ben, "I understand that; I have had just such notions myself. Why, wouldn't it be a good scheme for you to learn to read the stenograph while you are lying here on your back? I learned the alphabet and all about it before I ever saw a machine. My sister Line saw the one that they use at Dr. Forsythe's, and she sent me a slip of paper that had most all the letters on it. That's the way I learned. If I were you I'd pitch in and learn it lying here. It would be great fun; then when I go home I'll write you letters on my machine. You can read them, and nobody else can."

"All right," said Dorry, with more energy than he had used since he had been sick. "I'd like that first-rate. Is it hard to learn?"

"Oh, it takes pluck and patience," said Ben. "A little chap that hadn't much in him wouldn't learn it. He'd give it up, tired out, before he'd got half-way through the alphabet; but of course you won't."

No, Dorry wouldn't, after that speech! Ben fumbled in his pocket and brought out a little roll of stenograph paper, such as he was pretty sure to have about him.

"Here," he said, "are a couple of Bible verses that Line sent me to learn to read on. They are real good, because they have so many of the letters in them. The verses are written on the stenograph, you understand, and I copied them on this card from my sister Line's letter, and carried the card around with me in my vest pocket for weeks before I was sure of every letter. I'll leave them all with you, and day after to-morrow I'll come again, if I can, and see how you've got along. The carriage has come for me now, and I'll have to go."

"You'll bring the machine with you when you come,

won't you?" said Dorry wistfully; and receiving a hearty promise that this should be done, Ben took his departure. The verses on the card were especially calculated to teach a lesson to a boy like Dorry. These were the words:—

"Be not wise in thine own eyes. Fear the Lord and depart from evil." "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER "SIDE-TRACK."

BEN'S brief holiday sped away. He and Rufus and Fanny went home; school duties commenced again, and all things were as before.

No, not quite as before. Rufus and Fanny had learned some lessons of life which they were not likely to forget. They had discovered that a girl could be honestly earning her own living, and yet be as highly thought of by those whose opinion was worth having as though she were doing nothing.

Ben had his beloved stenograph, and worked at every leisure moment with such purpose that before spring he had a triumph. At the office one afternoon he found Mr. Welborne very much annoyed.

"I don't know what I'm going to do," said that gentleman impatiently. "Here's Harris sent word that he is sick, and cannot copy these notes of his; and there isn't a person in town, so far as I know, who can do it for him."

Mr. Welborne was not talking to Ben, but to his junior partner; but Ben had turned at the first sound of Mr. Harris's name, giving a keen glance at the notes to be copied. As he suspected, they were stenograph notes. As soon as he had finished distributing the

letters which he had in his hand into their proper places, he came toward Mr. Welborne.

"I beg your pardon," he said hesitatingly, "but if there isn't anybody else I think I could copy those notes for you."

"You!" said Mr. Welborne, with a smile; "I know you are a most accommodating chap, but I am afraid these notes will be too much for you. They are on a shorthand machine."

"I know it," said Ben; "I have seen Mr. Harris work. I can read the stenograph."

"You can! How long since? Where did you learn?"

"I learned early in the winter. My sister, who is in Philadelphia, sent me the alphabet and the Manual, and I learned how to read it before I ever saw a machine. Then at Christmas time I had a present of one, and have been writing on it ever since."

"The mischief you have! and I never knew anything about it! Can you take down letters at dictation?"

"I think I can, sir. Mother has dictated a great many to me for practice, and I have written them out afterwards and got every word."

"Glad to hear it," said Mr. Welborne complacently. "Harris is sick oftener than I have any patience with. The trouble is, he is sick of the business and wants to get out. Do set to work on these notes then. They are important ones, and if you can make a fair copy, and can take dictations, I can afford to give you pleasanter employment and better pay than I have been doing."

A boy does not work industriously on a stenograph for three months for nothing. The notes were almost

as easily read by Ben as though they had been in print. By nine o'clock that evening he was able to give an excellent type-written copy of them to the gratified lawyer.

From that time business was brisk for Ben Bryant, and the work was such as delighted his heart, and in itself was no small education; for Mr. Welborne's notes were dictated in choice English, and were on important subjects. He made a prompt advance in Ben's wages —such a surprising advance as caused great rejoicing at home, and some grumbling on the part of Rufus in regard to "people who were always in luck."

With Caroline the time sped away on swift wings. So busy was she with her studies, and with her loving care of Dorothy; so happy and proud was she with Mrs. Forsythe's increasing interest in her and pleasure in her ministrations; so glad was she, as the weeks flew on, over the near prospect of home once more, that she was the only one in the household, perhaps, who did not realise Dr. Forsythe's increasing gravity, and notice the tender, almost pathetic gaze which he sometimes fixed on Dorothy's fair face. It did trouble Caroline sometimes to think that Dorothy seemed not so strong as she was in the fall. "But it is the spring days," she said to herself. "Nobody feels as strong, I suppose; at least nobody who is not real well. I am sure I feel as strong as I ever did in my life, but of course Dorothy could not be expected to."

April passed swiftly, and May followed in its train, and the days of June were speeding so fast that examinations were just at the door, and Caroline had had her trunk brought from the storeroom, and was beginning to put in packages preparatory to the home-going.

"Just to think," she had begun to say to herself, "that I shall really see mother and Ben and Daisy in a few days more!"

Then, one evening after school, Dr. Forsythe called her as she was passing his office door. He was alone, and as he closed the door and sat down in front of the seat to which he had motioned her, his kind face was graver than usual.

"I have something to say to you, Caroline, which I have been putting off for several days—weeks, indeed—because I feared you might not like to hear it."

Caroline, startled, wondering, yet managed to say that she should hardly think it possible that Dr. Forsythe could say anything that she did not like.

He smiled in reply, a grave, sad smile, and then spoke hurriedly. "You cannot in the nature of things be expected to like it, and I have been in great doubt whether to speak it or not; but I have finally resolved to make the effort. I will not keep you in suspense. The plain, sad truth is, Caroline, that our little daughter is failing. We cannot have her with us long. It is increasingly apparent to me every day. You know we are planning for the seaside, and hope something from the sea air; but not very much, after all, so far as she is concerned. Can you guess what I am about to say? Can you imagine how her father and mother shrink from separating her from the young friend who has been so constantly with her during this long winter, and been to her such a comfort and help? Neither she nor we can ever forget. If you could find it in your heart, Caroline, to give up home and mother, and go to the sea shore with us, I do not say it would prolong our daughter's life, but I cannot help seeing that it would make the days she spends with us brighter, happier.

At the same time I know it is a great thing to ask. I know what it must have been to you to have been so long away from your mother. I know, better than you may imagine I do, the sacrifice it is to give up mother. I do not ask it of you, Mrs. Forsythe does not; glad as she would be to give Dorothy this additional pleasure, she shrank from the thought of making the request. I have not written to your mother, of course. It is only very lately that I decided to speak at all, and I will not now say anything to her until you have come to a decision. We must go next week; it ought to have been sooner, but Dorothy's heart is so set upon being present at the closing exercises of the public school, that I do not like to disappoint her. I leave the matter with you to think about. Remember, we realise how much we ask, and we shall not feel that you have done wrong—indeed, will not feel hurt at all—if you decide that you cannot really give up mother and home this summer, and go with us. Try to think as quickly as you can, and let me hear to-morrow, if possible, what your impressions are."

He hurried through the last sentence because somebody was already tapping at the door. With a bow and smile to Caroline he answered the summons.

Poor Caroline need not have waited until the next day to give her answer. She knew before he had completed his sentence what she must decide to do. It made her heart almost stop beating to think of being all the long summer without seeing mother; but at the same instant came the terror of the thought, What if she should never see Dorothy again!

Could it be possible that her father thought that she would not live longer than this one summer?

Perhaps it was not strange that the first thing this

girl, far away from home, did, when she reached her room, was to lock the door, throw herself on the bed, bury her head in the pillows, and burst into a perfect passion of tears. It seemed to her that from any point of view there was enough to cry for.

It was nearly an hour afterwards that she stood brushing her hair before the mirror, having bathed her eyes with the hottest water she could endure. In a few minutes the dinner bell would ring, and she must go down and meet them all, and they would know she had been crying, and Dr. Forsythe would know the reason. She was sorry for that. She would not trust herself to talk to him, but had resolved to write him a little note that very night.

"There is no use in waiting," she said aloud, to see how the words would sound; "I am not to go home, I know I am not. It is the right way to do, mother will think, and so will Ben, and even poor little Daisy. After all they have done for me, and after the way Dorothy loves me, it would be just cruel not to give her what she wants. I know mother will think I ought to stay with her all summer. I may just as well write the note to-night as to wait until to-morrow morning, because I am sure what it is right to do."

Therefore the note was written in Caroline's best hand, very brief, and to the point:—

"DEAR DR. FORSYTHE,—I will go with Dorothy if my mother thinks best, and I am almost sure she will. I will write to her to-night; and please do not think it makes me feel very badly. I love Dorothy so much that it would be hard to be away from her."

Matters shaped themselves exactly as Caroline had expected they would. The letter home was written,

and the Bryant family held a solemn convention over its contents. None of them was as much excited and startled as they had been over their disappointment in the fall.

After the second reading of the letter they all sat quiet for some minutes; then Mrs. Bryant said inquiringly, with a sad little smile, "Well, children?"

"Well," said Ben, heaving a long-drawn sigh, "I suppose it's the right thing to do, mother, isn't it? That poor little Dorothy!"

"What does our Daisy say?" asked Mrs. Bryant tenderly.

Daisy's face was grave; her hands were clasped in her lap, and her eyes had a far-away, sorrowful look. "Mother," she said at last, her lips quivering, but her voice low and composed, "I love my Line, and I want her very much, but if that little Dorothy is going to heaven pretty soon she ought to have Line, I think, this summer. Perhaps she needs her to help her get ready."

So the question was settled, and Caroline's trunk, instead of being packed for home, was packed for the seaside with all sorts of new and dainty summer things, such as she was sure would have driven Fanny Kedwin half-frantic with envy. And one summer day she took that long-planned journey on the cars. Not a very long journey, for the sea coast which Dr. Forsythe chose was but a few hours' ride from Philadelphia, but long enough for Caroline to realise the sharp contrast between herself as a traveller now and eight months before.

In the first place, it was a very different car which they occupied—a "drawing-room car," Dorothy called it—with easy-chairs and sofas, and a private room at

one end, where a luxurious bed was made up for Mrs. Forsythe.

It is not my intention to tell you much about that summer at the seaside; it was a very full, bright summer, and despite the shadow which hung low over the household, there were some sweet, glad days. Dorothy rallied a little under the influence of the sea breeze, and took what were for her long walks to the beach, and liked nothing better than to sit in the sand with Caroline beside her, watchful over the wraps and the sun-umbrella, that it was at exactly the right angle to shade her from the sun's glare, and watch the bathers, as they rose gaily over the tops of the waves, or the never-ceasing tide as it came rolling in. At intervals Caroline left her and wandered along the beach to bring beautiful shells, and delicate stones, pearly tinted, blue and amber. Long, quiet, restful days they were, when Dorothy seemed at peace with all the world, the only trouble she had being the one which she often put into words, "I'm so sorry, Caroline dear, that you have to be away from your mother and Daisy and Ben all summer. But you will go to them in the fall, and have a nice long vacation."

This was the utmost Caroline ever allowed her to say about the sacrifice, and was quick to assure her with kisses and caresses that she was having a lovely time, that she had never seen the sea before, and had always wanted to, and that she wouldn't be away from her dear little Dorothy these summer days for anything, and that mother and Daisy and Ben felt so too. Then Dorothy would smile her sweet, fair smile, and say gently, "You are all good to me; everybody always was. It is a very sweet world, Caroline, and some-

times I try to think how heaven can be any sweeter; if Jesus were not there it could not be. But the best of it is He is there, isn't He? Caroline, do you sometimes feel in a hurry to see Him?"

Caroline, awe-stricken, could only confess that she never had felt that way; she supposed it was because she was always well, and never had a "tired feeling." Then she would bring a new shell, or a stone, and try to turn Dorothy's thoughts away from the grave subject. So the days moved on.

"I think she is better," said Caroline one evening, in answer to Dr. Forsythe's quick, questioning look. It was Saturday evening, and he had come up from the city to spend a Sabbath with his family. Caroline, according to her custom, had gone to the station to meet him, in order that he might have the earliest possible news of Dorothy. "I really think, Dr. Forsythe, that she is stronger than she was; her appetite has been better, and she looks more like herself, for a few days, than she has since we have been here. But she has been in a great hurry to see you; she has asked two or three times to-day if we felt pretty sure that nothing would hinder you from coming."

"I had hard work to get away," he said gravely; "but I felt impressed that I must come to-night."

"Dr. Forsythe," said Caroline earnestly, as they walked up the street together, "don't you think, perhaps, now that the very warm weather is over, and the pleasant September days are coming, that Dorothy may grow stronger, and be real well again this winter?"

Dr. Forsythe smiled—that tender, grave smile which she had learned to know so well. "We never can be sure," he said quietly. "With a disease like hers we

never can be sure just when the end will come; but I have seen nothing this summer to encourage me thus far."

It was a very quiet Sabbath. Dr. Forsythe did not go to church, as had been his custom every Sabbath during the season, but stayed with his wife and Dorothy, sending Caroline and the grandmother away by themselves. It was noticeable that Dorothy talked to her father this time even more than usual, and seemed not to be quite happy when he was out of her sight. Yet the day passed very peacefully, and on Monday morning Dorothy certainly seemed, as Caroline had said, stronger than she had for weeks. "I believe the child is getting better," said the grandmother, with decision. "Her face is less pallid than it was, and this morning she really has a little colour. I felt sure the seaside would do her good. Can't you see she is improved, doctor? You are always so despondent, so inclined to look on the dark side."

The doctor smiled. "Am I?" he said. "I have need to find a bright side, if there is one, surely. She is all we have, mother."

To Dorothy's eager question as to whether her father must take the early train, and whether he was sure that he could plan to come down on Saturday just a little earlier than usual, so that they might have a visit together on the beach before sunset, he answered, with a smile that he tried to make bright and cheery, "We needn't discuss those points to-day, Dorothy; I am going to take a vacation and stay over. I arranged with Dr. Boydner to look after my patients, and assured him that for the one working day of the three hundred and sixty-five I was to be at leisure, and give myself to the delights of my family. Dorothy, I have brought

with me a new toy that I think you will enjoy. It was brought up from the station Saturday evening, after you and Caroline had retired, and is in my private room all ready for exhibition. Come to me as soon as you have had your breakfast, and I promise you a delightful entertainment."

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT LAST.

THE "new toy" was nothing more nor less than a phonograph, a machine in which Dr. Forsythe had been deeply interested for some time, and whose mechanical workings he had studied with great care. He now took the deepest interest in explaining in detail, both to Dorothy and Caroline, the practical working of this wonderful little instrument; then unlocked its gate, put in a cylinder, turned on the power, and called upon Dorothy to talk to it.

"What shall I say, papa?" she asked, a pretty pink flush of excitement on her fair cheek.

"Say anything you please, daughter. Speak in your natural tone of voice, just as though you were talking to me, and use any words you please; you can talk to mamma, if you choose, or to grandmother, or Caroline. It will take down every word you utter."

Sure enough it did, and was an object of absorbing interest to Dorothy all the morning. Cylinder after cylinder was placed at intervals during the day, and she was permitted to talk to them; to sing, in her sweet, clear voice, one of her favourite hymns; to recite a poem of which both she and her mother were especially fond, and to say all manner of loving words. It was noticeable that Dr. Forsythe, though he had

explained the economy of the invention, by showing them how to pare a cylinder after it had once been used and copied, so that it might be used again and again, even to the number of seventy times or more, would carefully set away in a box on an upper shelf every one to which Dorothy had spoken, with directions that they on no account be disturbed.

To the astonishment and delight of his daughter Dr. Forsythe announced the next morning that he intended to take another play day. "I feel a year or two younger on account of this one," he said smilingly, "and I have telegraphed Dr. Boydner that he need not expect me to-day. He said I would become so fascinated with the phonograph that I wouldn't be able to tear myself away, so he will understand at least one of my reasons."

Another long bright day, full of interest and satisfaction to Dorothy, was spent by the little family of which Caroline seemed to herself to have become a part. Mrs. Forsythe, whom the sea breezes had really improved, was able to rest on the couch in the doctor's room, and enjoy with them the "talking machine," as Dorothy had named it, which did not in the least lose its charm. Later in the day, after the mother had been carried in her husband's strong arms to her own room for a rest, Dorothy and Caroline were alone together. Dorothy had been lying back among the pillows, resting also. Suddenly she roused herself and looked toward the phonograph.

"Caroline, put a cylinder in the talking machine, please. I want to talk a letter to papa and mamma. I know why papa doesn't want any of those up on the shelf pared; he wants to keep his little Dorothy's voice to talk to him next winter. Isn't it nice that he can?

Now I will talk a letter to him and mamma that they will not know anything about, until some day you will tell them, and it will please them very much." Caroline had no words to answer. Silently she lifted the cylinder into the machine, pushed up the chair for Dorothy, arranged the pillow at her back, turned on the power, and stood waiting to see what she was to do next.

"Now," said Dorothy, smiling up at her, "would you just please to go into the other room and leave me all alone a little while? I want to talk some words to papa and mamma just for them, you know. They are good-bye words, Caroline, that I don't know how to say to them, because it makes them feel badly; but some day they will like to put the cylinder in this machine and hear it say the words in my own voice."

Tears were choking Caroline's voice so that she could not answer, except by kisses, which she left on the two fair cheeks as she moved softly away. She waited at the door outside for Dorothy's call, and presently it came.

"I've finished it," said Dorothy, in a tone of intense satisfaction; "a nice long talk. Put it away, Caroline, on the very top shelf, and put a little slip of paper inside marked 'Dorothy's talk to papa and mamma.' I've said some sweet good-bye words to them. It is very nice; I am so glad papa brought the phonograph down to me, so I could talk to it for them. I meant to write a little letter, but this is a great deal nicer, isn't it, Caroline? because they can hear my voice say the words. Now let us go to mamma's room and see the sun set. There will be a lovely sunset to-night, I think; those clouds over there are beginning to reflect it already."

In a few moments more she was cosily settled on

a couch in her mother's room, her head resting on the pillow beside her mother's, one hand clasped in her father's, and her face turned toward the glowing west. It was a wonderful sunset—unlike any which Caroline had ever remembered before. They talked about it for a few minutes, called one another's attention to the lovely gold, the glowing crimson, with its background of violet shading into even darker hues, and the clouds took strange shapes like castles and towers burnished with gold.

"There's a door," said Dorothy suddenly, her eyes fixed on the glory. "The door of heaven, and it is wide open; it looks as though there were angels standing in the door beckoning. Do you see them, papa? Look, mamma; look, Caroline! angels and angels, ever so many of them, right in the door and all about it. Ah! there, they have gone, and the door is shut."

She was still again. They were all very still. A strange hush seemed to have fallen upon them, broken first by the sound of a stifled sob, for grandmother was crying. A moment more and Dr. Forsythe arose, turned on the gas, which had been but a faint glimmer, and bent over Dorothy. She lay just as she had when the twilight began—face close to her mother's on the pillow, one hand clasped in hers. But Dr. Forsythe, bending low till his lips touched hers, said tremulously, "Our darling has gone in, and the door is shut."

There was a sad journey back to Philadelphia, carrying with them the precious body whose soul went home in that twilight, when to her the doors of heaven seemed to open, and the angels came to meet her.

Those had been sad, anxious days which followed.

Mrs. Forsythe, shocked by the blow, which with all her preparation had at last come suddenly, for a few days sank rapidly, and it seemed for a time as though she, too, was going away. But she rallied, and tried bravely to take nourishing food, and to sleep and rest, and not wear out her heart with weeping.

"I must not go yet," she said to Caroline, with a faint smile; "it would be too hard for the doctor. He cannot spare Dorothy and me both at once. Dorothy would want me to stay and comfort him. I must try to grow strong."

Once during those trying days had Dr. Forsythe paused in his busy, anxious life, to lay a kind hand on Caroline's shoulder, and say earnestly, "Child, you are a comfort to us. I hardly see how we could have done without you. It will be a blessed memory to us always that you were with our little girl to the last moment—went to the very door with her. We can never forget it, Caroline. You have a blessed mother, I know, and no one must step in and take her place; but next to her, my child, think of Dorothy's father and mother as your own. You will always be to us a dear older daughter. For your own sake, as well as for the sake of the one you loved, we shall delight to plan for you as if you were indeed our very own."

Mrs. Forsythe said it differently. Caroline was one evening arranging the pillows, just as some way she had a talent for doing, and Dorothy's mother reached up, put a fair arm around her neck, drew her head close down to the pillow, and said, "Dear little girl! Dorothy's Caroline and my Caroline. Love us for her sake, won't you? You must go home very soon; that is right, of course; it is hard to have kept you so long. But when you have had a good long rest and visit

come back to us, dear. Think of your school duties, and home life with us. Pet me instead of Dorothy, dear; I need it. We cannot try to get along without you, and I am glad there is no need; for you should be in school, and there are no better ones than we can offer you."

At last the morning came, and the hour and the moment when Caroline Bryant was actually seated in the Philadelphia train on her way home, whirling over the road which she had travelled, a desolate little girl, so many months before. How different everything looked to her; how utterly different everything was! She thought of that forlorn little girl, in a torn, soiled dress that had done duty all day in the woods, in a pair of heavy shoes much the worse for wear, gloveless, and without wraps or baggage of any sort. What a different picture was the trim maiden who occupied a seat in the parlour car, clothed from head to foot in the most becoming and appropriate of travelling costumes —hat and gloves and all her belongings matching exquisitely—and at her side a modern travelling bag carefully stocked with every convenience that a young traveller could possibly need.

Conductor Brinker made many stops at her seat; opened her window for her or closed it, drew down the shade or put it up as occasion suggested, and did everything he could think of for her comfort. But there was a respectful air about it all, an air of deference such as he showed to ladies; he even called her "Miss" when he brought her some bright flowers which she had caught sight of by the roadside and admired.

Caroline smiled, and answered promptly, "I am just Caroline, Mr. Brinker; don't call me anything else.

Here is a paper of bonbons which I wish you would take to Daisy and Bubby. I was going around to say good-bye and leave them, but I hadn't time, so I thought I would bring them along and give them to you."

Great was Conductor Brinker's pleasure at this. "Bubby would be tickled to death," he declared. He remembered her, of course he did! He talked about her for days after the last time she was there. And Daisy was very well; getting to be a right good, smart girl, her father said. "Goes to school regular as clock-work. Means to grow up a smart lady like her Caroline," and he smiled broadly.

As the day wore away, and the train neared the familiar station which meant home and mother and Ben and little Daisy to this homesick heart, Caroline had much to do to maintain her dignity. She felt at times as though she must tell all the passengers her story. How she had gone to Philadelphia, oh! ever and ever so long ago, without any intention on her part, and stayed without any expectation of doing so, and been side-tracked a great many times when she was about to start for home, but that now she was really and truly within three miles of home! However, she did nothing of the kind, but sat erect, with her cheeks growing pinker and pinker, and looked steadily out of the window. They passed the Junction which had caused her so much trouble without so much as a halt.

The sun was set, and the street lamps were being lighted as they rolled into the station; at last she was at home. Outside were mother, and Ben, and Daisy, and Mr. Holden, and Mrs. Kedwin, and Fanny and Rufus! She could see them, every one, even before the train stopped. She tapped on the window and fluttered her handkerchief, and Ben caught a glimpse

of it. Before she could make her way to the platform he was beside her.

What a home-coming was that!

"My darling!" said Mrs. Bryant, folding both arms about her, and giving her such a long, long kiss that Daisy felt as though her turn were never coming. "My darling, we have you indeed!"

"Why, Line Bryant," said Fanny Kedwin, "how you are rigged up! Dear me, I should think you were going to a party." But Caroline was being smothered in Daisy's arms, hearing her soft, tremulous voice murmur, "My Line," and had no ears for Fanny Kedwin.

They came over that evening, Fanny and Rufus, with their mother. "The children had to come," said Mrs. Kedwin. "I told them they ought to stay away one night and give you a chance to visit with your folks; but they were that crazy to see you that they couldn't give it up. My sakes, Line! but you have grown into a fine lady, sure enough. 'Fine feathers make fine birds,' that's a fact. They have got good taste, I'll say that for them, and you are a pretty girl, anyhow. Clothes look well on you."

Caroline laughed and blushed, while Ben gravely gave it as his opinion that clothes looked pretty well on most people.

"Are you going back there?" asked Fanny a little later, as Caroline obliged herself to go away from her mother's side and sit down by the young folks for a little talk.

"Say, Line, Ben says you are going back there. Are you?"

"Yes," said Caroline; "I am going back to school. The schools are splendid there, you know, and I am to

go through; complete my education and graduate, if I want to."

"Oh, my sakes!" said Fanny, "what luck."

"I think as much," said Rufus. "Say, you folks, do you know that it is exactly a year ago to-day that we went nutting?"

"That's a fact," said Ben, considering for a moment. "Line, it took you a whole year to get home from a nutting excursion; just think of it!"

"And only think of all the things that have happened since," said Rufus. "I tell you what it is, Line Bryant, I am the one to be thanked for all your feathers, ruffles, and watches, and I don't know what not. If it hadn't been for me going off that night leaving you asleep, and all that, it wouldn't any of it ever have happened. I never thought of that before. All the good luck you have had this year has come through me."

"You were never willing to take the blame before," said Ben, laughing. "If you hadn't put her on the wrong train the going to sleep wouldn't have done any harm. But never mind, it's all over now. She's got back, if it has taken her a long time to do it."

Caroline's smile came through a mist of tears. She could not talk so glibly of all that had happened as they could. The year had been full of blessing to her, and it seemed to her that she could never be grateful enough for having known and loved her Dorothy; but the pain of parting from her, and of doing without her, was too recent for her to be able to laugh and talk cheerily of all the "happenings" of that year.

"I suppose they gave you lots of things?" said Fanny, not being able to get away from the practical part of the matter.

"Is that your best dress you travelled in? Oh, my

sakes! a nicer one than that? Well, they spent lots of money on you, that's a fact."

Caroline was silent, and half-indignant. How rude and unrefined and almost coarse this old friend of hers had grown! The year seemed not to have changed her in the least for the better. She had had in mind to tell them about the beautiful soft white dresses, and blue dresses, and wraps and hats, which with loving thoughtfulness Mrs. Forsythe had sent to Daisy. "They are all my Dorothy's things," she had said, when she took the key of the large trunk from under her pillow and handed it to Caroline. "They will just fit your Daisy. I cannot have them lie and grow yellow and creased and moth-eaten, perhaps, because my darling has gone to heaven and will need them no more. I would a great deal rather Daisy had them. Besides, she wanted it so. She sent them to Daisy herself. That was one of the messages in her letter, Caroline."

Caroline had thought to tell about the letter given to the "talking machine," and to describe some of the pretty things in the trunk, and tell them how sweet Dorothy had looked in them, but Fanny's sordid views and disagreeable ways of talking closed her lips. She felt sure that they would not understand.

"You are great folks for luck," said Rufus, with a sigh; "I always said so, and if this year doesn't prove it I don't know what does. To think that because that train was twenty minutes late all this should have happened!"

THE END.

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